

1998 Herman Goldstein Award  
for  
Excellence  
in  
Problem-Oriented Policing  
Nomination



Los Angeles Police Department  
Rampart Area  
MacArthur Park Revitalization Project.

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## ABSTRACT

### SCANNING

Mac Arthur Park is a 32-acre public park located in the heart of one of the most criminally active areas of Los Angeles. Historically, the park has hosted an amalgam of crimes ranging from acts of violence to quality of life issues.

Due to the criminal activity and the pervasive blight in and around the park, residents avoided visiting their own park. At night, the park and streetlights did not operate thus creating an environment conducive to gang and narcotic activity. Structures in the surrounding area were targets for vandalism and other criminal acts. Graffiti was prominent within the park including the children's play area. Throughout the years, gang members and narcotics dealers eventually took-over the park. This resulted in a sense of resignation and helplessness from local residents, area merchants and park visitors. Environmental design also played a significant role in the deplorable conditions of the park. Trees and shrubbery were overgrown and unsecured alcoves and stairwells served as housing for transients and as hiding locations for criminals. For many local residents and merchants, Mac Arthur Park was an "unsolvable situation."

In July of 1997, the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) Rampart Area began a Community Policing project targeting Mac Arthur Park. The project's goal was to improve the quality of life in and around the park.

### ANALYSIS

In order to obtain a clear and objective perspective on the situation and to explore possible solutions, several brainstorming sessions were held between the Area Senior Lead Officer, Area patrol officers, Area Command Staff and community members.

The officer who spearheaded the project used knowledge obtained during the LAPD's Community-Police Problem Solving (C-PPS) training course to analyze the problem. The officer employed strategies provided by the class such as utilizing a Department recognized problem solving process and developing contacts with outside organizations for assistance in dealing with the specialized needs of this complex problem. Based upon the severity of the crime in the targeted area, Rampart Area officers determined that a multi-agency approach was the most effective response to this problem.

### RESPONSE

Through the combined efforts of the LAPD, outside agencies and community members, a problem-solving strategy to combat crime was implemented. Through numerous foot beats, bicycle patrol and increased patrols in the area, the officers developed a rapport with the local residents, park visitors and area merchants who in turn shared valuable information regarding the park and the surrounding community. Various agencies worked with the LAPD and community members to remove graffiti, improve the environmental design and mitigate narcotics and gang activity. Public education was also a key element in the problem solving process.

### ASSESSMENT

Within the last year a gang injunction was implemented targeting 92 violent career criminals. In a one-year period **there** have been; 180 gang members arrested for various violations, 709 narcotics arrest and 865 quality of life arrests (i.e., illegal vendors, urinating in public, open alcohol containers, drunkenness in public, etc.). Though there is still gang and narcotics related problems hi the area, they have been reduced significantly. Overall, crime in the target area has decreased approximately 24 percent. Officers who have been involved in this effort now comment on the notable decrease in crime.

The true indicator of the project's success is evident by the increase in visitors to the park. The once barren children's play area is now bustling with children laughing and playing as their parents' watch. Weekends and holidays bring families with picnic baskets ready to enjoy the now clean grounds. An occasional park event draws people from throughout the Rampart community. The dramatic improvement in the park's condition and increase in families enjoying the park is sending a clear message to the criminal element that crime and intimidation will no longer be tolerated in Mac Arthur Park.

## **MacArthur Park Revitalization Project**

### **(Description)**

#### **SCANNING:**

In recent years, the area known as MacArthur Park in the City of Los Angeles has experienced an increase in violent crimes and narcotic activity related to gangs. In July 1997, the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD's) Rampart Area began a Community Policing project targeting MacArthur Park. Officers and community members used the Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment (SARA) problem-solving model to identify and solve the problem. The project's goal was to improve the quality of life, to enhance public safety and to reduce the fear and incidence of crime in the community. In order to achieve this goal, the following objectives needed to be met: remove the blight from the area, reduce the fear and incidence of crime, mitigate gang-related crimes and obtain community involvement. Community involvement was essential in maintaining the project.

The targeted project area is a 32-acre regional park bordered by Alvarado Street on the East, Park View Street on the West, Seventh Street on the South and Sixth Street on the North. The identified rival gangs were the Eighteen Street Columbia Little Cycos (sic) Clique, Crazy Riders, Wanderers, and Mara Salvatrucha (Hispanic gang). There had also been a large number of transient encampments throughout the park. The violent crimes consisted of assault with a deadly weapon, extortion, robbery, drive-by shootings, carjacking and homicides. Other crimes included narcotic sales and use, burglary from motor vehicles, and vandalism.

Due to the criminal activity, residents avoided walking in the area of MacArthur Park, even during daylight hours. At night, park lights, as well as, streetlights were rendered inoperable allowing the criminal activity to flourish and creating a menacing and unsafe environment for local residents and business communities.

Residents, business establishments and community members who would frequent the park were afraid to report crime to the police for fear of retaliation. Gang members continually extorted business owners and charged "rent" to community members who would frequent the park. In addition, the area gangs had marked the park and streets with their gang affiliations. Gunshots were heard almost nightly.

ANALYSIS:

In order to obtain a clear perspective on the situation and to explore possible solutions, several brainstorming sessions were held between officers and Community-Police Advisory Board (C-PAB) members. Community-Police Advisory Boards consist of community volunteers who work in partnership with the Los Angeles Police Department to identify, prioritize and solve Community-Police problems to improve the quality of life in Los Angeles.

As a result of the brainstorming sessions, individuals and groups affected by the problems in the area were identified and a list of questions was developed. Creation of the list helped to identify possible resources, concerns and past responses to the problem. As part of this early analysis, input was elicited from various City, State and Federal agencies, as well as, the community. In addition to the brainstorming session with the C-PAB, the community's input was sought informally. Officers walked through the neighborhood and spoke to community members about their concerns.

A project steering committee was organized by the project's lead officer to find innovative ideas to unite and improve the community. The steering committee consisted of representatives from the Mayor's office; County Supervisor; City, County and Federal Human Relations Department; United States Assistant Attorney General; City Attorney; District Attorney; City Council representatives; Community

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Redevelopment Agency; Department of Public Works (Bureau of Street Maintenance); LAPD detectives and narcotics officers and City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.

As a means of charting and evaluating the project's progress, problem-solving goals were established for a three-month, six-month, and one-year period:

The short-term (three-month) goals included abating the daily recurrence of graffiti and vandalism to light standards in and around the area; reducing violent crime; identifying the primary offenders; establishing a zero tolerance for gang activity and mobilizing community involvement.

The mid-term (six-month) goals included apprehending offenders; conducting parole and probation enforcement; holding neighborhood clean-ups and potlucks; working with Metro Transit Authority - Transit Group; sharing information with community members and other City agencies; targeting and apprehending career criminals; working with business owners to remove annoyance items (public telephones used by gangs) and to address the counterfeit document and narcotic activity problems; working with the local Councilmember to improve area resources and City responses and creating an environment in which residents and business establishments cooperate with, rather than fear the police.

The long-term (one-year) goals included improving the overall quality of life; re-claiming the community from the gangs; assisting community members to take pride and ownership in their community; reinforcing positive attitudes and perceptions among the youth; reducing violent crime and receiving positive feedback from the community.

In addition, a strategic plan was developed to circumvent gang involvement through early intervention of school children and to educate the community on the importance of neighborhood unity. As a means of responding to the strategic plan, children were encouraged to join Jeopardy, an LAPD at-risk youth program and the Law Enforcement Explorer Program, a youth mentoring program affiliated with the Boys Scouts of America.

At the onset of the project, officers analyzed crime reports and the *lack* of reports being made. The query was directed toward the neighborhood residents, business owners, and community members who frequent the park, in order to identify specific problems that were not captured by Rampart Area's Crime Analysis Detail. The findings revealed that graffiti, gangs, violent crimes, and narcotics sales and use were the primary concerns of the community.

A crime analysis study indicated that 61 percent of the crimes were committed on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from the hours of 1600 to 0200 hours. The majority of crimes were committed near three identified "hot" spots within the targeted area. Throughout the project, Rampart Area's Crime Analysis Detail maintained thorough crime information on the neighborhood, including arrest and deployment statistics. Officers used the statistics as a tool to measure their progress in reducing crime in the neighborhood.

In order to analyze the problem, the officer that led the project used the knowledge obtained during a Los Angeles Police Department Community-Police Problem Solving (C-PPS) training course. The officers employed the tactics provided by the class such as developing contacts with outside organizations for

assistance in dealing with the specialized needs of this diverse community. Based upon the severity of the crime in the targeted area, Rampart Area officers determined early on that a multi-agency approach was the most effective response to this problem. Therefore, monthly meetings were conducted between Rampart Area and the following agencies: Rampart Area's Special Problems Unit (SPU); Area Detectives; Narcotic Enforcement Team; Operations-Central Bureau Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH); Department of Building and Safety; Rampart Field Enforcement Section (FES); Central Bureau Narcotics; local Councilmember's office; local Congressional representative; City Attorney's office; probation and parole officers; City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and California Youth Gang Services. During these meetings, the problems were discussed, including; what had been done, what still needed to be done, and if there was a better way to resolve the problems. The entities involved in the meetings helped brainstorm and volunteered their services. In addition, Rampart Area Senior Lead Officers played a vital role in analyzing and responding to problems in the community. Senior Lead Officers are patrol officers who oversee and coordinate the problem-solving activities of the Basic Car, the Los Angeles Police Department's primary service delivery units. A Basic Car consists of a group of officers, one Senior Lead Officer and additional officers, assigned specifically to patrol and answer calls for service in a designated geographic location (patrol beat). The Rampart Area's Basic Car in relation to the target area consists of 22 officers.

**RESPONSE:**

Officers worked the targeted area to develop a problem-solving strategy to combat crime and to present a highly visible police presence. The Patrol Commanding Officer allocated Los Angeles Police Department's special resources such as, Special Problems Unit (SPU) and Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH), to walk foot beats and increase police visibility in the area.

Through numerous bike patrols, foot beats and increased directed patrols in the area, the officers developed a rapport with the residents who talked with them regarding their needs. Roll call training was also conducted for officers on all watches regarding this project and the special needs of this area.

A communication system was created for all Rampart Area's Basic Car officers. All officers working the concerned Basic Car received a copy of the trespass file, a list of targeted offenders, and the Los Angeles municipal codes pertaining to quality of life problems in the area. Rampart area officers met with children to gain their trust and respect. Officers established a rapport with the community by having booths at community events held in MacArthur Park, providing Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) items, bicycle safety, and offering finger printing and photo's for the children. As residents began to believe in the sincerity of the Los Angeles Police Department, they provided information regarding their community.

Other Los Angeles Police Department resources allocated to the target area included: The Metropolitan Division (Mounted Unit); Central Traffic; Vice Unit; Rampart Field Enforcement Section (FES); Operation Central Bureau Field Enforcement Section; Narcotics Enforcement Team and Bike Unit; Air Support; Rampart reserve officers; Explorer Scouts; Juvenile Curfew Task Force, and Immediate Booking and Release System (IBARS). The Rampart Bike Patrol Unit developed a rapport with community members that frequented the park, as well as, residents and business establishments in the area. The unit also targeted quality of life issues such as, illegal vendors, urinating in public, open liquor containers and public drunkenness. Field interviews conducted by officers also provided information about the neighborhood.



Detectives continuously monitored the specific targeted location for all crimes of violence and gang activity. They established a liaison with the United States District Attorney's office and the Los Angeles City Attorney's office for special handling of prosecution cases from the targeted area. The detectives maintained contact with victims and witnesses to ensure that no intimidation occurred from the defendant's associates.

Rampart Area C-PAB members also got involved by assisting Senior Lead Officers in a curfew task force. In addition, the Rampart Area Explorer Scouts went door to door passing out information on laws concerning juveniles. Later that week, Rampart Area conducted a Gang Suppression Detail in the targeted location and arrested curfew and probation violators. Rampart C-PAB members also volunteered in notifying parents of the arrest.

Patrol officers actively sought out concerned residents and gave them information regarding neighborhood watch programs. Officers also contacted apartment owners about placing no trespassing notices on their properties. Members of Juvenile Division, Rampart Juvenile Car Unit, and Rampart Youth Center were also contacted for information regarding after school activities for youth to steer them away from gang activity. The Foreign Prosecution Unit informed officers on how to proceed with illegal immigrants committing crimes. Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH) targeted specific gang locations and enforced all traffic violations, which led to numerous arrests for automobile theft; felony warrants; concealed weapons; narcotics; assault with a deadly weapon; rape and burglaries.

The following external resources were utilized to reduce the fear and incidence of crime, especially gang violence, and improve the quality of life in the neighborhood:

- Electricians from the Department of Recreation and Parks devised a system to prevent vandalism to the electrical outlets of light standards. They also replaced bulbs and increased the wattage of light standards in problem locations. Floodlights were also installed in locations where there was no existing light.
- The Senior Gardener for the Department of Recreation and Parks assisted with the maintenance of park grounds and increased the number of trash receptacles in the park. In addition, a large number of trees and shrubbery were cut back to increase visibility for public safety reasons.
- The Supervisor in charge of the Metropolitan Region, Department of Recreation and Parks was consulted on logistical concerns of the Los Angeles Police Department. It was requested that the playground be cemented to prevent dealers from hiding their narcotics in the sandbox and requested was that construction of the new restroom be designed to prevent vice activities. Also requested the removal of several *port-a-potties* that were placed in the park, due to health concerns.
- The Aquatics Unit assisted in implementing safety features in the deployment of the paddleboats in the lake. It was also requested that the water fountain be shut down due to water contamination.

- Clean-up and graffiti removal efforts for the park and surrounding neighborhoods were completed by local groups such as, the MacArthur Park Foundation, International Church, Para Los Ninos (St. Vincent Hospital), and People.
- The Department of Motor Vehicles and Immigration and Naturalization Services conducted enforcement procedures to combat the sales of counterfeit documents. City, State and Federal level social workers worked on the placement of transients in and around MacArthur Park and offered housing and 12-Step Programs for interested parties.
- Officers worked with Santee Dairy to retrieve the plastic milk and bread crates used by the illegal vendors in the park and surrounding areas and enlisted the help of ABC Shopping Cart Retrieval to collect stray shopping carts. Transients were using the shopping carts to carry their personal belongings in, and gang members and narcotic dealers were using them to hide their narcotics. The shopping carts were also used for hiding stolen property.
- Community service workers trimmed trees in the exterior perimeters of the park to provide crime prevention through environmental design.
- Bureau of Public Works, Street Maintenance, picked up large discarded items and swept adjacent streets to the park.
- Representatives from Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan's program, "Operation Bright Lights" replaced streetlights and added bulletproof coverings.

- General Telephone and Electric (GTE) removed a nuisance telephone booth from the neighborhood. The telephone had been the source of numerous complaints by residents as a "gang out" location for gang members and counterfeit documents dealers.
- Officers conducted enforcement procedures with the Department of Probation and Parole in apprehending target gang members and parolees at large.
- The revitalized Alvarado Corridor Business Association helped to increase customer interest in businesses at that location. As a result, the Bureau of Public Works, Street Maintenance was contacted and improved the streets and the disposal of trash in receptacles.
- An injunction order was obtained by Rampart CRASH Detectives that targeted 92 named career gang members. The injunction has been referred to as the *18<sup>th</sup> Street Gang Injunction*, since it concerns gang members from mainly the 18<sup>th</sup> Street area.
- A Federal Grant entitled "Weed and Seed," was obtained in the amount of 575,000. The funding of this Grant enabled the Los Angeles Police Department and a Federal Task Force to target the MacArthur Park Area and to enforce the 18<sup>th</sup> Street Gang Injunction.
- The opening of the Rampart Youth Center offered the children in the area a positive relationship with Rampart officers. The youth center was strategically placed in the center of Rampart Area, thus creating a site for after school activities. Employees from the Department of Recreation and

Parks also worked with the Senior Lead Officer in identifying locations and alcoves within the park, where transients set up encampments.

- The Steering Committee was able to mobilize the entire community with ease, when word spread that a correctional facility/work furlough program was attempting to relocate across the street from MacArthur Park. City officials from all levels and the Area Senior Lead Officer also joined in the effort to stop the move.

#### ASSESSMENT:

In a six-month period, over 100 gang members were sent, or returned to jail as parole or probation violators and the remaining gang members began to leave the neighborhood. There are still gang-related problems in the neighborhood, but occurrences have been drastically reduced. As part of their new partnership with the police in reporting crimes, the residents have now learned how the Police Department functions and the proper City entities to call for various non-police services. This has helped to reduce the number of unnecessary telephone calls to the Police Department. At the onset of the new policing deployments, the residents were somewhat skeptical of the Police Department's sincerity in tackling their problems. However, as the community gained confidence in the Police Department, they began to report crimes more often. As a result, there was an increase in reported violent crimes. This new communication between the community and officers provided the tool necessary to arrest gang members and parolees preying upon this community. Overall, crime in the targeted area has decreased by about 24 percent in Part I crimes (burglary, assault, robbery, rape, and murder). Officers who have been involved in this effort throughout the year now comment that they have witnessed a dramatic reduction in crime. The area residents appreciated the Department's response to graffiti, gangs, violent

crimes and abandoned buildings. The community enjoyed an increase in patrol visibility and generally felt that the LAPD was more responsive to their concerns.

Rampart Area officers have received countless thanks from community members for the Department's work in their neighborhood and residents now frequently wave to passing officers. Children approach police cars more frequently, and the community as a whole has said, "thank you" for finally addressing their longstanding concerns. Officers working the neighborhood have received several written commendations of support. Growth and development of the community has begun, as businesses move back into the area. The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), of the MacArthur Park/Westlake Area, is continually making strides in improving the neighborhood.

Although the community and the Los Angeles Police Department accomplished major improvements in the area, we are still constantly working to better the neighborhood. The Department will continue to work with Recreation and Parks to create a more user friendly community service center for both the community and police officers. Together, the community and the Department will work with their local council office, as well as, the Department of Recreation and Parks to negotiate how the implementation of Proposition K funds will be allocated for MacArthur Park.

**AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION:**

The MacArthur Park Recovery project was initiated by Officer Christine Perkins and implemented by the Los Angeles Police Department's Rampart Area. Rampart Area Captain Mark Leap, Administrative

Support Captain Richard Meraz, and the former Rampart Captain Nick Salicos provided ideas, support, leadership, and allowed the freedom to experiment with non-traditional methods of problem solving. Officer Perkins used the knowledge she had obtained during the Community-Police Problem Solving (C-PPS) training course to respond to the problems in the targeted neighborhood. The Department's Community Policing Group training cadre instructed a mandatory eight-hour and forty-hour course to all officers and supervisors. Officer Perkins employed the tactics provided by the class. She also developed contacts with outside organizations, contacts necessary in dealing with the specialized needs of this diverse community. In the targeted neighborhood (MacArthur Park/Pico Union district), approximately 75 percent of the population consists of Central American immigrants. In response to the Spanish speaking community, Officer Perkins assisted in the instruction and implementation of a Spanish version of the C-PPS training, designed for community members and business owners. Attendees included the Area C-PAB Board members, LAPD personnel, various City service organizations, Mexican Consulate, community members, and members of outside community agencies. During this 10-week class, Officer Perkins, along with a number of instructors presented her project and the class held a group discussion regarding gang intervention, narcotic addiction, domestic violence, Alcohol Beverage Control laws and regulations; and the role of the Los Angeles Police Department. Attendees were also provided a book with an overview of all topics including a list of City and outside agencies to contact for various resources. Officer Perkins also addressed a number of neighborhood watch groups, business watches, and non-profit organizations in the area and discussed various problem-solving strategies. The C-PPS classes for community members are continuing throughout the city in both English and Spanish.

Department personnel encourages all officers to use problem oriented policing techniques. The LAPD conducts annual training for all officers in Community Policing, and the current rating system for officer

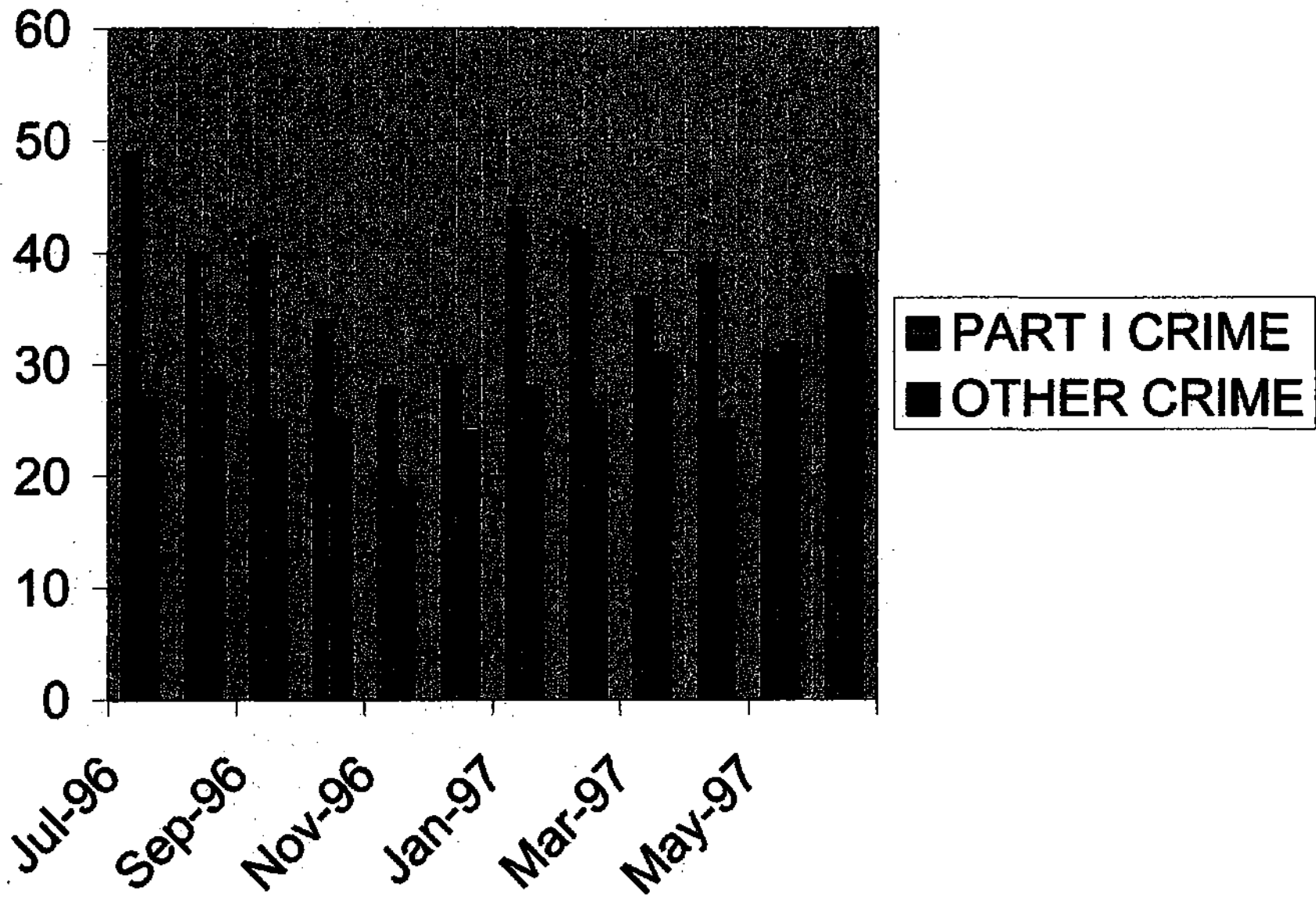
evaluations includes a grade based upon the officer's Community Policing involvement. Overall, the LAPD recognizes the importance and necessity of Community Policing and has made a long-term commitment to the advancement of these efforts.

Officers and community members used the Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment (SARA) problem-solving model to identify and solve the problem. The project's goal was to improve the quality of life in the community. In order to achieve this goal, the following objectives needed to be met:

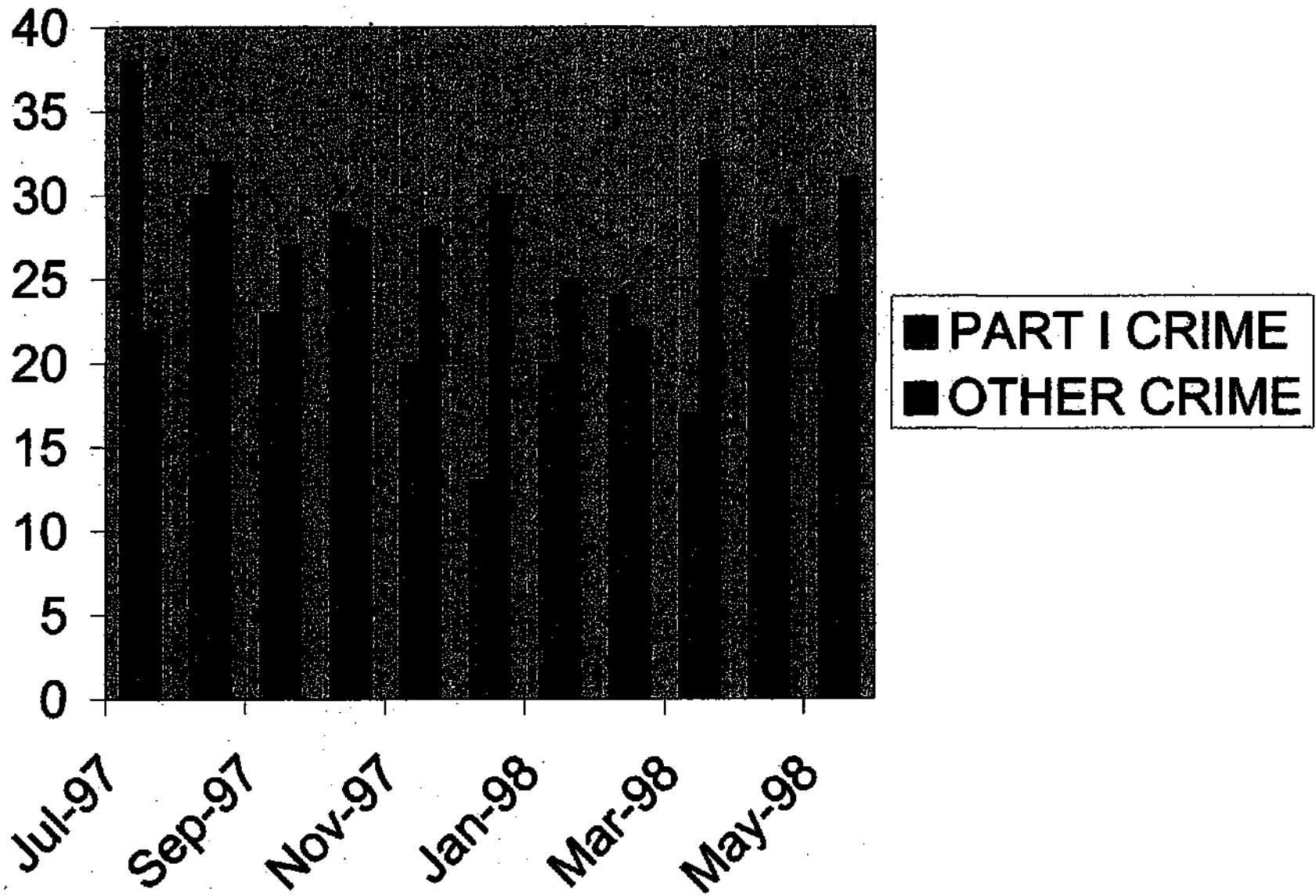
Remove the blight from the neighborhood, reduce the fear and incidence of crime, mitigate gang-related crimes and obtain community involvement.

As stated in the project description, many Department resources were committed to combating the problems in the project area. Some of the Department resources included the Patrol officers; Bike Unit; Vice; Narcotics Enforcement Team, Operation Central Bureau Narcotics; Rampart Field Enforcement Services (FES); RSP Team; Rampart Reserves; Explorers; Juvenile Curfew Task Force; Special Projects Unit; Detectives; CRASH; Central Traffic and Operation Central Bureau CRASH. Organizations which donated time, money and/or supplies included: 7<sup>th</sup> Street /Coronado Neighborhood Watch; Knob Hill Association; Korean Senior Citizen Group; Westlake Protectors; Para Los Ninos; Jugamos Para Los Ninos; MacArthur Park Foundation; Community Redevelopment Agency; Los Angeles International Church; Alvarado Vendors Association and Alvarado Business Association. Assistance was also received from other City, State and Federal agencies that are mentioned in the project description.





TOTAL CRIME REPORTED 730



JUNE IS NON-CALCULABLE

TOTAL CRIME REPORTED 548