



Neighborhood Policing Team

*Neighborhood Policing team will see it all, educate and go to work
in the heart of National City*

National City Police Department



National City Police Neighborhood Policing Team

'Q' Avenue Project (Community Redevelopment)

SUMMARY

Scanning:

This two-block long cul-de-sac was over-saturated with "criminal element." The street was lined with 133 densely populated, dilapidated apartment buildings. The substandard living conditions housed a high concentration of illegal immigrants, gang members, and narcotic activity. Trash lined the sidewalks and graffiti covered every building. The broken window theory had fostered a full-fledged ghetto in the area. These factors all led to an inevitably high number of police calls for service.

Analysis:

This problematic two-block area had been a problem for over 15 years. Traditional police tactics had been used with minimal and very temporary results. Based upon the data provided by the Crime Analysis Unit, knowledge of the area's history, and an assessment of environmental conditions, a response plan was formulated.

Response:

Our initial response involved traditional police tactics. We flooded the area with police and took a zero tolerance approach to all criminal activity in the target area. At the same time, however, a number of non-traditional environmental and social changes were being formulated. While some of the criminal element was removed easily enough, a large resistance was met as we tried to implement some "quality-of-life" enhancing changes. It became clear that property management techniques within the target area were very poor and resistant to change. The Fire Department, City Building Inspector, and Department of Environmental Health were utilized to inspect the substandard living conditions. Buildings received health and safety violations and were eventually abated. We sought out the assistance of National City Community Development Commission (CDC) and Southern California Housing Development Corporation (So Cal Housing) to redevelop the entire two-block area.

Assessment:

National City CDC and So Cal housing negotiated and agreed to share a 12 million dollar expenditure to redevelop the two-block area. The package

deal included remodeling of all building interiors and exteriors, new landscaping, a perimeter wall around the entire street, a swimming pool, a community recreation room, a community park, and 24-hour on-sight security.

A complete assessment is not yet possible, as the physical redevelopment is still underway. About 1/2 of the properties have already been remodeled. Based on appearance alone, the area has made a 180-degree shift. With many problem tenants evicted and new property management in place, we have begun to create the desired overall long-term improvement. Calls for service in the area have already decreased by 36%.

National City Police Neighborhood Policing Team

"Q" Avenue Project (Community Redevelopment)

DESCRIPTION

A. Scanning:

1. What was **the** nature of **the** problem?

A two-block cul-de-sac, lined with densely populated, dilapidated apartment buildings. The substandard living conditions housed a high concentration of illegal immigrants, gang members, and narcotic activity. These factors all led to an inevitably high number of police calls for service. This drain on the resources of the police department remained constant, as solutions, up till now, were not lasting.

2. How was **the** problem identified?

The problem had existed for years. Beat officers complained about the amount of time spent handling calls, and moreover the amount of reports generated out of the area. Additionally, there were numerous complaints about the area that were generated by the general public.

3. Who identified the problem?

See above.

4. Far more problems are identified than can be explored adequately.

How and why was the problem selected among others?

In addition to the high number of calls for service, officers throughout the department were spending a large amount of unobligated patrol time in the area. The area was well known as a "target rich environment" for criminal activity. The amount of narcotic activity reached such a level that the Drug Enforcement Agency's Mobil Enforcement Team moved into the area and conducted a lengthy investigation.

Additionally, this problem stood out in that we recognized that this project presented a significant opportunity to make a dramatic change, and if successful, the project's solution may replicate itself throughout the city.

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

Clearly, there were significant problems involving gang members, illegal immigrants, and narcotic activity. The underlying "root" problem however, was believed to be the living conditions that allowed these criminal activities to continually occur. The mere number of low rent, over populated apartments in utter disrepair was targeted as the underlying cause of problems in the area.

B. Analysis:

1. What methods, data and information sources were used to analyze the problem (e.g., surveys, interviews, observation, crime analysis, etc.)?

National City Police Department's Crime Analysis unit compiled statistics relating to the number of calls for service in the area. In a 15-month time period, we responded to 340 calls-for-service in the small target area. Also compiled were the type and time of calls for service. The types of calls ran the entire gamut with Disturbing the Peace standing out as the most frequent. We conducted both overt and covert surveillance observations of the target area, taking note of those environmental elements, which were believed to be contributing to the problems. We also took "before" photos of the area just prior to the beginning of the project. Finally, we spoke to the residents and property managers about their perceptions of the problems on "Q" Avenue.

2. History: How often and for how long was it a problem?

The problem area had existed for a minimum of 15 years. There were certainly time periods of increased and decreased criminal activity, but the level of activity was always significant. At the initiation of the project, the area had declined into its worst state.

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

Numerous gang members, illegal immigrants, and drug abusers were all involved as symptoms of the root problem. However, it was the overpopulated dilapidated buildings, and moreover the landlords of those buildings that were the true cause of problems in the target area. Without the crime haven created by the landlords, the gang members would not have had a graffiti invested turf to claim; the illegal immigrants would not have had an overpopulated mass to hid within; and the drug dealers would not have had a run-down area to deal out of.

The motivations of the different symptomatic groups varied. The drug dealers needed a run-down area to deal drugs out of, where their neighbors were less likely to "rat" on them by calling the police. The drug users, no doubt, enjoyed the proximity to the dealers. The gang members enjoyed tagging an area where graffiti was the norm and was accepted by the people who inhabited the area. The illegal immigrants flocked to the run down mass of apartments where they could be lost in the shuffle; again, not worrying about the neighbors calling the police.

The motivations of the Slumlords were obviously different than that of the groups they hosted (gang, alien, drug, etc.). The Slumlords, as the name indicates, were simply out to make a buck. The owners of these sub-standard properties simply wanted to collect rent and expend as little money, effort and time as possible. As evidenced by their lack of interest in property management training, they had absolutely no interest in improving their properties, and thus the quality-of-life of their tenants.

4. What harms resulted from the problems?

The fact that the property owners let their properties fall into disrepair harmed the entire neighborhood by causing it to perpetually get worse. This was a perfect example of the "broken window theory." Once the area became run down and there was no effort to fix it up, the residents came to accept it in its disgusting condition. It continued to get worse in this manner, with no end in sight.

The two-block area had gone into a downward spiral and resulted in a full-fledged "ghetto." Just from an aesthetics point of view, the area begged for

less than desirable renters. This created an ideal location for gang members, drug users/sellers and illegal immigrants.

The harms caused by the gang members included graffiti, fear, and a multitude of crimes of violence. The harms caused by those involved in narcotics included a number of people under the influence, and typically a number of people carrying weapons. The harms caused by a large concentration of illegal immigrants included a lot of people driving without licenses and a number of people afraid to report wrong doings. Illegal immigrants are less likely to become part of a solution in this sort of an area because they are not apt to report sub-standard living conditions and they will not call the police to report crime because they fear being deported.

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

Prior to this project, the root problem, of landlords letting the area fall into disrepair, was not at all addressed. The only problems addressed were those symptoms of that root problem (gang members, illegal aliens, and narcotic activity). Additionally, these responses were typically reactionary and not

proactive. Without adequate staffing to make up a crime suppression unit (plain-clothes street team), enforcement was left to uniformed patrol officers working that particular beat. When the beat officer had some unobligated patrol time, he/she would "shake-down" gang members, illegal aliens and narcotic users in the area. More the norm however, was that the officer would answer a call of gang members fighting, robberies, burglaries, drugs being sold, etc. The results were very short term and included some arrests and a large number of reports taken.

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

The analysis merely illustrated that our current police tactics in the area were ineffective. The PD had no previous contact with the property owners/manager. There had been no attempt to address the environmental factors, and there was little to no dialogue with the residents. The quality-of-life of the apartment tenants on "Q" Avenue was low and was not improving. Traditional police work alone was obviously not enough to make any sort of long-term change. If any real change was going to be made in the area, it would require an innovative approach.

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

The information provided by our Crime Analysis Unit revealed a larger number of calls for service than we had anticipated. In the fifteen-month time period researched, we responded to 340 calls for service in the small two-block area. The types of calls ranged the entire gamut, but what stood out as the most frequent type of call was 415PC-creating a disturbance. Out of 37 different types of calls, 89 calls or 26% of all the calls for service were for creating a disturbance. The next most frequent category, other than miscellaneous, was department-initiated activity at 19 calls or 5.5%. This unusually large amount of disturbance calls directly reflects frustrated residents, calling the police due to unhappiness about their quality-of-life.

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

Not all landlords in the target area were Slumlords. Some of the property owners recognized the improvements that needed to be made, but simply did not have the financial means to make the needed changes. Also, the fact that the apartment buildings on "Q" Avenue all had different owners, created another problem. It simply did not benefit one owner to make property improvements, if the neighboring buildings remained in disrepair. It was difficult to get eight different property owners on the same page. Ideally, we needed one company to manage the entire two-block area.

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

An initial community meeting was held at the police department. Groups at the meeting included: representatives of the police department, property owners, managers, some tenants from "Q" Avenue, and the City's Senior Assistant City Attorney. Police calls for service and quality-of-life issues were the main agenda of the meeting. While the residents and some of the property owners shared our displeasure with the area, some of the property owners did not show much concern.

After the initial meeting, the City Senior Assistant City Attorney called a meeting with other City department heads to discuss possible solutions to the problems on "Q" Avenue. Participating departments included: Building & Safety, Fire, Engineering, Planning, Parks & Recreation, and Public Works. This meeting sparked several follow-up meetings and really got the ball rolling toward redevelopment of the area.

C. Response:

1. What range of possible response alternatives were considered to deal with the problem?

Initially, we thought we could simply provide some property management training to the property owners and managers. We tried to teach them proper tenant screening techniques. If they checked for proper identification and ran proper financial and criminal background checks, they would be able to weed out the less desirable tenants before they set up roots in the complex. We also evaluated the environment surrounding their complexes

and gave suggestions based on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principals.

If property management/owner training, and improvement suggestions were not accepted, we were prepared to go so far as to seek the assistance of City Building & Safety, Fire and the County Health Department. We would not stop short of having the properties abated and sold to more responsible, law-abiding people/groups.

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

We started out with a somewhat traditional police response to some of the symptoms of the root problem. We took on a zero tolerance approach to criminal activity in the area. We conducted field interviews on anyone loitering in the area. 18 gang members that lived within the target were identified. Numbers of gang related and drug related arrests were made. Traffic operations were run and numerous cars were impounded due to immigrant drivers and others without licenses, expired registrations, etc.

A key example of the type of problem we were dealing with is illustrated in a "dope house" we worked: We conducted surveillance on an apartment where we suspected narcotics were being sold. The landlord of this particular apartment was an absentee landlord that lived out of state. The landlord employed a small local property management company to maintain this particular building. We contacted the property management company to try to get them to provide information on the residents of the apartment in question. The company had almost no information on the tenants and provided us little to no help. We ultimately wrote and served a search warrant on that apartment and it resulted in recovery of some drugs, a gun and the deportation of two Jamaican males who were smuggling narcotics via the mail. One of the two suspects had a prior smuggling conviction. Had proper tenant screening been employed, the suspect never would have been allowed to rent the apartment.

As a non-traditional type of response, we hosted a meeting with property owners, managers, tenants, and the Senior Assistant City Attorney. This meeting focused on police calls for service and quality-of-life issues on "Q" Avenue.

We then attended a meeting on the same topic listed above, but this time with City department heads from: Building & Safety, Fire, Engineering, Planning, Parks & Recreation, and Public Works. This meeting helped to get a number of different resources on the same page, working toward the same goal.

We hosted several meetings to try to teach the property owners and managers proper tenant screening techniques. We also pointed out CPTED issues and made related suggestions. In accordance with CPTED, we increased lighting in the area. Current streetlights were changed from 150 to 200 watt lights, and two additional streetlights were added. Additionally, City "dusk to dawn" lights were added to many of the buildings at no charge to the owners. We also had a payphone, previously littered with gang graffiti and used to set up drug deals, removed.

Since some of the property owners were not very receptive to our suggestions to improve the area, we utilized the Fire Department, Building & Safety, and the Health Department to conduct safety inspections of the apartments. Several buildings received violations. When the properties were not repaired, we sought out and obtained abatement.

We then introduced Southern California Housing Development Corporation (SOCAL) into the equation. SOCAL is a non-profit governmental corporation, which utilizes redevelopment funds to buy dilapidated properties and rehabilitate and professionally manage them. We sought out SOCAL Housing because of their reputable track record in property management. We realized that one professionally trained management company would have a better chance of successfully managing the entire two-blocks. SOCAL initiated negotiations with our City Community Development Commission. The two entities eventually agreed to spend 12.6 million dollars to redevelop the two-block area.

We participated in a Clean-Up day hosted by SOCAL. Over 200 volunteers picked up trash, hauled away old furniture, tore up carpet, trimmed bushes, and removed graffiti for three hours. The event drew federal and local government officials such as Congressman Filner's office, County Supervisor Greg Cox's office and National City Council Members. The group filled seven rollaway industrial-size trash containers.

The entire project is not yet complete. To date, SOCAL has purchased all properties within the two-block area. They have refurbished approximately 1/2 of the properties and anticipate a completion date of November 2000.

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

In response to the compiled crime statistics, we developed the zero-tolerance mentioned earlier. Traditional police work was the result of the numbers alone. However, our decision to try to teach property management techniques came from personal visits to the buildings and surveillance of the area. Our decision to seek abatements did not develop until we met resistance in the response phase.

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, practically, etc.)

Potential effectiveness was the most important evaluation criteria for the department. We had already been spinning our wheels on "Q" Avenue for at least 15 years. It was time to make a change that would be long lasting.

Legality, community values, cost and practically were also important, but potential effectiveness remained paramount.

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

The primary goal was to reduce the number of calls for service to "Q" Avenue and thus lessen the burden on patrol. The second part of our mission was to increase the quality-of-life for residents and neighbors of the area. Instead of being perceived as the "arm-pit" of that City sector, we wanted to make "Q" Avenue an attractive and desirable place to live; to manipulate the environment and make it less susceptible to criminal activity.

6. What resources were available to help solve the problem?

Initially we knew that we might be able to tap our City CDC to allocate some funds toward redevelopment of the area. What we did not know and were very happy to learn was that an entity like SOCAL existed and was actually very interested in our cause. The fact that SOCAL and CDC

evaluated our project and decide to allocate 12.6 million dollars was a wonderful resource and a great surprise.

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

Refer to "Scanning" and "Analysis" sections.

8. What difficulties were encountered during response implementation?

The difficulties encountered involved the problematic landlords. The property owners/managers were not properly screening their tenants nor were they maintaining adequate livability of the apartments. We attempted to teach proper techniques, but some of the owners and managers showed no interest. When we stepped up our response by sending in Building & Safety and the Health Department for inspections, mandated changes/corrections were still not made. Finally, we were forced to seek abatement.

Another problem we faced was that several of our city departments failed to take ownership in some of the problems on "Q" Avenue. There was a ragged city park within the target area that looked like it barely survived a

nuclear blast. There was an unsealed flood control channel that served as a hub for loitering gang members. We could not get Parks & Recreation nor Engineering to invest in the needed physical improvements. Their resistance involved budget concerns, lack of interest, and a lack of ability to realize that their involvement could actually make a difference.

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

The main players in the response to this problem involved many different city entities including; the Police Department, our City Attorney, the fire department and Building & Safety. The two most significant parties, however, proved to be our city CDC and SOCAL Housing. Without the 12.6 million dollars committed by these two groups, our success would not have been nearly as extensive.

Assessment:

- 1. What were the results? What degree of impact did the response plan have on this problem?**

The results of the response to the symptoms were traditional in nature. We seized narcotics, sent people to jail, documented gang members, etc., all with very short-term results.

Where we obtained substantial results is where we responded to the root problem; the absentee landlords and the Slumlords. We had their properties abated. We located a company that, in conjunction with our city CDC, committed to spending 12.6 million dollars to the redevelopment of the problematic area. Thus far, SOCAL Housing has purchased all the properties in the two-block area, and they have refurbished approximately half of the apartments.

Upon completion, SOCAL Housing will both own and manage all 133 units in the target area. They will refurbish all the apartment interiors and exteriors. They will repair walls, paving, drainage, fences, piping and re-landscape the entire two blocks. SOCAL Housing will add amenities including a learning center, tot-lot, open play area, barbecues, security gates and courtesy patrol.

To this point, total police calls for service in the area have already dropped by 36%. Disturbing the Peace calls dropped by 35% and narcotic related calls dropped by 87%. To obtain a true comparison, however, we will have to wait until completion of the project. The completion date is currently estimated to be November 2000.

2. What were your methods of evaluation and for how long was the effectiveness of the problem-solving effort evaluated?

One method of evaluation involved a comparison of calls for service. The initial time period evaluated was the fifteen month time period between January 1, 1996 and March 31, 1997. For the most recent comparison to date, We looked at call for service from January 1, 1999 to March 2000. As stated above, total calls for service dropped by 36% and narcotic calls dropped by 87%.

The effectiveness of the problem solving effort is being evaluated on an ongoing basis. A true calls-for-service comparison will only be possible after completion of the project. In terms of aesthetics, the area already looks

100% better. The refurbished apartments and landscaping has an astounding curb appeal.

3. Who was involved in the evaluation?

Our crime analysis unit compiled the calls-for-service for comparison.

Police Officers throughout the department have commented on how well the completed portion of the complex looks thus far.

4. Were there problems implementing the response plan?

Yes, refer to question #8 in the Response section.

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

NIA

6. What response goals were accomplished?

All response goals were either met or are still in the process of being met.

Although the redevelopment project is not yet complete, we have already decreased total calls for service by 36% and narcotic calls by 87%. We have certainly increased the quality-of-life of residents and neighbors of the area.

7. How did you measure your results?

Already answered earlier.

8. What data supported our conclusions?

Crime analysis numbers stated earlier.

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

Possibly by involving more personnel from within the police department at various levels and drawing upon their training and experience to provide other possible avenues of response. Additionally, we could have increased our level of communication about the project with others, not only within our department, but also with the other city departments involved.

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

Displacement in this case was inevitable, at least in terms of the symptoms of the problem. The drug users/dealers will certainly continue to be involved in narcotics, there will always be illegal immigrants, and gang members will not just disappear. We fully realized that these elements would just move to another area. However, we also realized that we can not cure the entire city at once. We take it one problem at a time, and attempt to make a long lasting solution. If we improved the quality-of-life of the residents and neighbors of these 133 apartments, and we have, then we have successfully done our job.

Displacement of the root problem (i.e., these same inadequate landlords), within our own city, is less likely. Once these landowners had first hand experience with how seriously we take quality-of-life issues in National City, we believe they will think long and hard before they purchase and mismanage any more properties within our city limits. The experience of abatement will no doubt remain a vivid impression in their mind.

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

Our response will indeed require continued monitoring. During this refurbishing phase, and even after final redevelopment, we will need to maintain a line of communication with the property management company. If proper tenant screening is practiced, and buildings are appropriately maintained, the long-term results we are seeking can be achieved.

National City Police Neighborhood Policing Team

"Q" Avenue Project (Community Redevelopment)

Agency and Officer Information

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

This particular problem solving effort was initiated and carried out by our department's Neighborhood Policing Team (NPT). NPT is a proactive policing unit designed to augment the Department's continuing efforts of achieving the objectives of Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving. NPT currently consists of six Officers and a Sergeant. Throughout this project, NPT had the support of our Chief, Captain, and shift Lieutenant. Additionally, patrol Sergeants and Officers assisted by providing extra patrol to the target area, and forwarding all related information. Also, the Crime Analysis Unit provided NPT with all necessary statistics.

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

All members of NPT have received extensive training in Problem Oriented Policing/Problem Solving, including regular attendance of the Annual International POP Conference held in San Diego. Patrol officers are occasionally given POP-related line-up training by NPT Officers.

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

Additional incentives were not given for this project specifically. However, National City Police Officers are evaluated annually, and any innovative attempts at Problem Solving are highly regarded by Administration.

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?

In terms of resources, NPT has a practice of creating and housing a binder for every "embarked-upon" project. The binders contain detailed plans, following the S.A.R.A model. Also included are copies of all related correspondence, news clippings, photos, after-action reports, calls for service and other related statistics. The binders are a beneficial reference tool; however, NPT also tries to stay out of the rut of working every project in the same manner. The team regularly conducts round table brain storming sessions in an attempt to come up with new and innovative plans of attack.

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

None

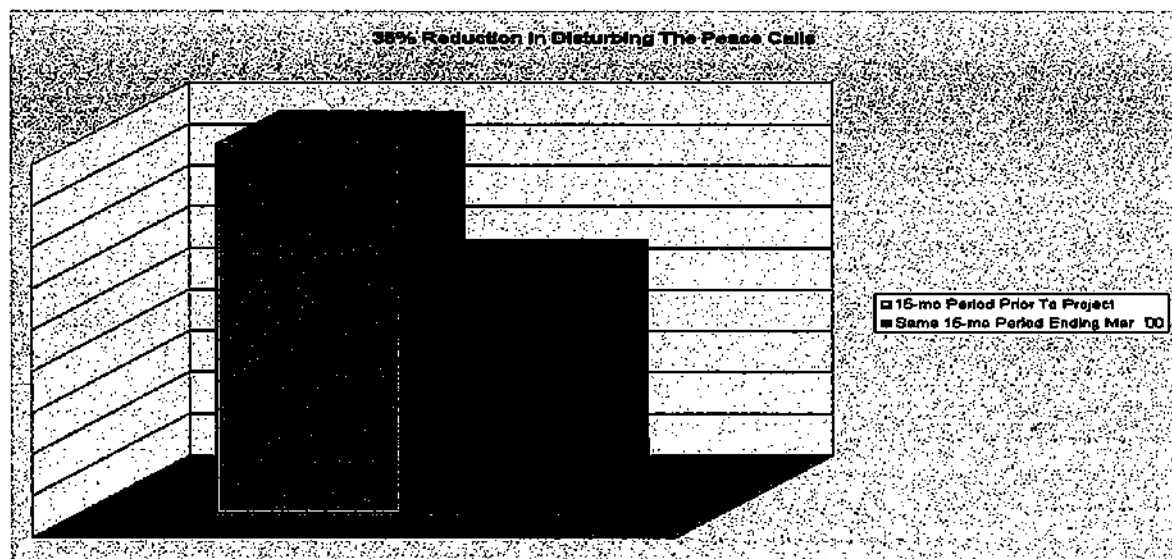
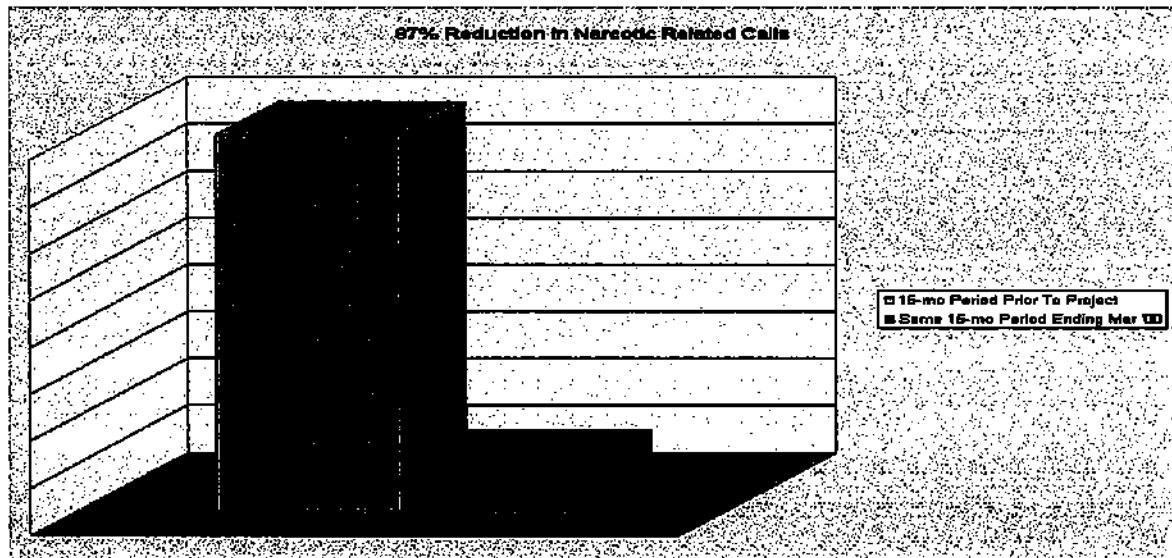
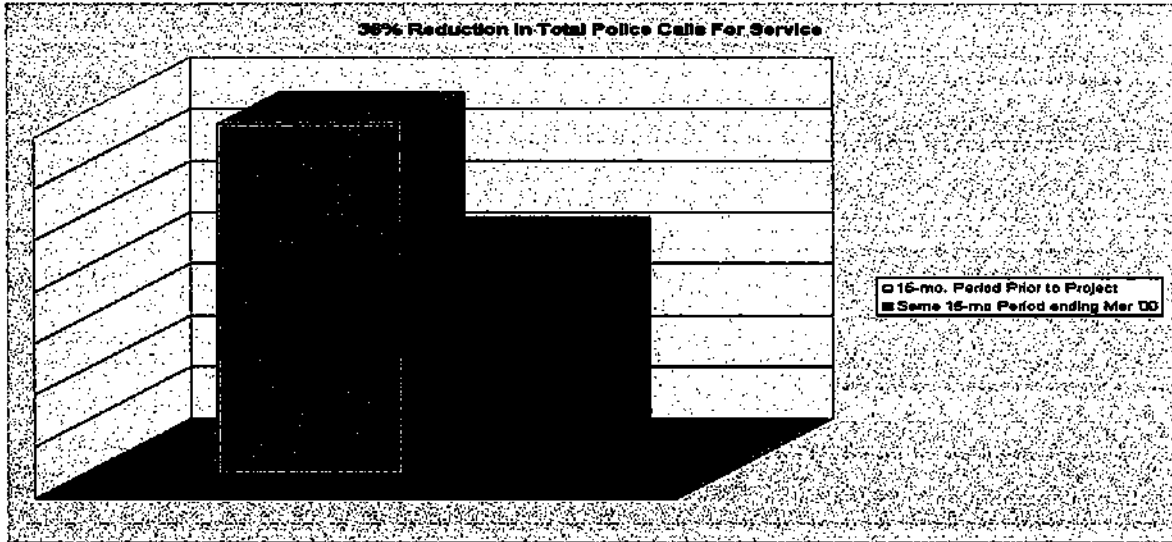
6. What general resources (financial and/or personnel) were committed to this project, and of those resources, what went beyond the existing department budget?

The general and expected resources that were committed to this project included the seven bodies in NPT. The gigantic resource however, that was

certainly above and beyond anything budgeted was the 12.6 million dollars committed by Southern California Housing Corporation and National City Community Development Commission. This huge financial expenditure, of course, had nothing to do with the Police Department's budget. It was rewarding to discover that some funds are out there for the tapping; they just have to be sought out.

7. Project Contact Person:

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**Calls For Service
By Type of Call
1400-1599 "Q" Avenue
January 1996 - March 1997**

Accident/Traffic	17
Arrest	6
Assault w/ deadly weapon	6
Assist Other Agency	3
Attempt Suicide	1
Battery	11
Burglary-Commercial	1
Burglary-Residential	5
Burglary-Vehicle	10
Check Welfare	7
Crimes Against Children	3
Department Initiated Activity	19
Disturbing The Peace	89
Domestic Violence	2
Drinking in Public	2
Emergency Disconnect	6
Extra Patrol	6
Field Interview	13
Fire	1
Grand Theft	1
Hazard	2
Impound/Parking	5
Medical	8
Missing Person	3
Narcotic Activity	8
Petty Theft	4
Preserve the Peace	
Pursuit	1
Recovery	4
Retake Land After Legal Removal	2
Shots Fired	3
Stolen Vehicle	9
Suspicious Activity	18
Threatening Phone Calls	3
Trespassing	3
Vandalism	6
Miscellaneous	51

Calls For Service
By Type of Call
1400-1599 "Q" Avenue
January 1999 - March 2000

Accident/Traffic	3
Alarm	4
Animal	1
Arrest	2
Assault w/Deadly Weapon	2
Assist Other Agency	1
Attempt Suicide	1
Auto Recovery	2
Auto Theft	2
Battery	10
Burglary-Residential	1
Burglary-Vehicle	2
Carrying Concealed Weapon	1
Check Welfare	8
Citizen Flag	4
Code 6	1
Disturbance	58
Domestic Violence	6
Emergency Disconnect	18
Fire	1
Follow Up	10
Grand Theft	1
Harassing Phone Calls	2
Hazard	2
Impound	17
Medical	1
Miscellaneous	29
Missing Persons	5
Narcotic	1
Petty Theft	1
Preserve The Peace	2
Repo	2
Runaway Juvenile	1
Self Initiated	1
Sex Offend/Lewd Act	1
Shots Fired	1
Suspicious Person/Activity	6
Threats	1
Trespassing	3
Vandalism	3