

**Herman Goldstein Award Submission** ○  
**April 2002**

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This submission for the Herman Goldstein Problem Oriented Policing Award is made by the Regina Police Service recognizing the contribution and collaboration of the community partners who made the initiative possible:

- Regina Fire Department;
- Public/Separate School Principals, North Central Regina;
- Social Development Unit, City of Regina;
- Public Works/Bylaw Enforcement, City of Regina;
- Department of Social Services, Province of Saskatchewan;
- Regina Police Service

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**A Community Development initiative to  
Reduce the Number of Fires  
Set by Children and Youth**

SCHOOL

**SUMMARY**

**SCANNING**

The Regina Police Service identified the need for a Community Oriented Policing Through Problem Solving (COPPS) approach in North Central Regina. The community, with just over 6.5 per cent of Regina's 187,441 population, generates about 20 per cent of the calls for service and approximately 30 per cent of the reports submitted in certain crime categories. It faces many issues typical of an inner city neighborhood.

In April of 1999 the Regina Police Service opened the North Central Community Service Centre situated in the heart of this inner city at the Community Centre attached to Scott Collegiate. This Centre is based on a multi-agency concept. It is staffed by a full time complement often police officers and a probation officer, as well as a part time youth worker, victim services worker, bylaw enforcement officer and human justice practicum students. The Centre coordinates problem solving efforts in the area and thus became involved in the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee when contacted by the Fire Department with concerns over the number of fires in the area.

In October of 1999 the Regina Fire Department's Senior Fire Inspector noticed there was an unusually high number of fires set deliberately by young children in the North Central neighborhood. While this neighborhood has for many years had the highest number of garbage dumpster fires - all deliberately set by children and youth - the fires in October of 1999 which numbered twice the normal average, were in large part structure fires, that is, fires set in sheds, garages and vacant houses. These deliberately set fires were especially concerning in light of the fact that half of all the unintentional house fires and half of all fire related deaths in the City of Regina were already occurring in the North Central neighborhood.

This was the beginning of the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee and ongoing activities that were developed to respond to this problem.

## **ANALYSIS**

There has been ongoing analysis of this problem since it was first identified. The initial analysis came from the fire fighters attending the scene of these incidents. The fires were initially concentrated in an area of approximately 16 square blocks. The fires were usually occurring between 8 PM and 2 AM. The fire fighters attending the scene were getting information that young children were setting the fires and in a few cases were able to identify the children responsible at the scene of the fire. It was identified that most of the fires were occurring when the garbage bins were overflowing, in the days just before garbage pickup. In this neighborhood garbage pickup happened on Monday and Tuesday, so the peak fire days were Saturday and Sunday.

In 1999 there was a total of 453 garbage fires in Regina. One-third, or 167 of these fires occurred in North Central. This is only slightly higher than the 146 garbage fires in North Central in 1995.

Things changed dramatically in 2000. In that year the overall city garbage fire total jumped to 638 garbage fires. Nearly the entire city increase over 1999 levels occurred in North Central alone, which had 315, or half of the city's garbage fires, up from one-third of the city's total a year earlier.

There were some significant trends being identified within these numbers. The significant increase in the number of garbage fires in 1999 continued through 2000. Three peaks were identified in the fire setting activity. The first peak was occurring each year in May; the second peak in August; the third and highest peak in October. The level of activity occurring in the earlier peaks each year was a predictor of the level of activity for subsequent peaks.

## **RESPONSE**

In addition to the initial recognition of the increase in North Central fires, there was a significant event that occurred which prompted the formation of the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee and the subsequent activities to respond to the problem.

The incident occurred one noon hour when the Fire Department was called to put out a house fire in the neighborhood. A number of children at the scene, watching the activity unfold, gave the Fire Department's Manager of Public Education the names of several children who they said had started the fire. The firesetters were students at Kitchener Community School. With the help of the school's Principal, the students were identified to the Regina Police Service.

The coordinated activities that occurred following this incident, highlighted the importance of a multi-disciplinary response to the overall fire problem.

The Fire Department called a meeting of North Central community members and organizations in an effort to get the various people involved in combating the fire problem together at one table. The first meeting was held on November 18, 1999. Those who attended included members from the Regina Police Service, the City of Regina's Social Development Unit, the Principal from Kitchener Community School, and various members of the Regina Fire Department.

The goal of the first meeting was "to get the various people involved with this serious fire problem together so they could tackle it collectively and in a coordinated way".

Since the first meeting the Committee has met a total of 13 times, and its membership has been expanded to include the other three neighborhood elementary schools, the neighborhood high school, the city's Public Works and Bylaw Enforcement Departments, and the provincial Department of Social Services.

Since that first meeting in November 1999, the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee has undertaken a number of activities and initiatives in the North Central community. These activities and initiatives include the following:

- Weekly Fire Report
- Visual Identity and Logo
- Elementary Schools Program and Garbage Fire Video
- Pre-Kindergarten Program
- Christmas Card - Magnet - Sports Program Insert
- Garbage Pickup Rescheduling
- Co-coordinated Police / Fire Response Policy Changes
- Truancy Project
- Garbage Container Artwork Project
- Problem Oriented Approach - North Central Community Service Centre

## **ASSESSMENT**

The Keeping Our Community Safe Committee, with the work it has accomplished, has had a significant positive impact on the neighborhood, community relationships, and the North Central fire problem.

A strong and effective working relationship has been built among all members of the committee. The committee continues to develop new initiatives to combat the issues related to the North Central fire problem. These relationships and initiatives demonstrate success of the Committee itself.

An analysis of the fire statistics indicate that past trends related to North Central fires have changed, and the problem is now under control. This is due to the ongoing preventative programming and the investigative response, which has been built and is in place to deal with fires as they occur. The October 2001 peak which was predicted to be much higher than the October 2000 peak of 78 fires never materialized, and instead there were only 26 fires for the month. This positive trend has continued with a total of only 18 fires in the first three months of 2002. In addition to this, the last fire related fatality in North Central occurred in December of 2000.

The police response to this problem would not have been as effective without the existence of the North Central Community Service Centre which has been the catalyst to effective problem solving.

We believe it is this combination of prevention, education and enforcement, coordinated among a number of organizations, that has finally made a significant impact on the problem.

It is important to realize how the Keeping Our Community Safe project is conceptualized in relation to the SARA problem solving model and this submission. The problem was first identified, and the scanning phase occurred, in October and November of 1999. The analysis and development of response strategies evolved through 2000 with the first implementation in the spring of 2000. The effectiveness of the strategies was assessed by the fall of 2001 and into the beginning of 2002. The information contained herein, therefore, will be presented in these phases.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### SCANNING

The 2001 Regina Health District population data indicates 12,154 people live in North Central Regina or roughly 6.5 per cent of the City's population of 187,441. Poverty is a key issue in the community, and with poverty a number of social issues develop. According to Statistics Canada 1996 Census Data, 1995 household income for families in North Central is half of the average household income for families in Regina overall. This data also indicates the neighborhood has a higher proportion of single-parent families than the rest of the city; nearly 35 per cent of the families, compared with 17 per cent for the City of Regina. More than half of the neighborhood's families live in rental homes, higher than the 35 per cent average for the City, according to this 1996 Census, and these homes are generally older than those in the rest of Regina, with nearly half built before 1946. The families are also larger. The City's 1996 Neighborhood Profile identified that half of the households have four or more children.

The Regina Police Service identified the need for a Community Oriented Policing Through Problem Solving (COPPS) approach in North Central Regina. The community, with just over 6.5 per cent of the population generates approximately 20 per cent of the calls for service and approximately 30 per cent of reports submitted in certain crime categories. In April of 1999 the Regina Police Service opened the North Central Community Service Centre situated in the heart of this inner city at the Community Centre attached to Scott Collegiate. This Community Service Centre is based on a multi-agency concept. It is staffed by a full time complement of ten police officers and a full time probation officer, as well as a part time youth worker, victim services worker, bylaw enforcement officer and human justice practicum students. The Community Service Centre coordinates problem solving efforts in the area and thus became involved in the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee when contacted by the Fire Department with the concern over the number of fires in the area.

In October of 1999 the Regina Fire Department's Senior Fire Inspector noticed there was an unusually high number of fires set deliberately by young children in the North Central neighborhood. While this neighborhood has for many years had the highest number of garbage dumpster fires - all deliberately set by children and youth, the fires in October of 1999 were in large part structure fires, that is, fires set in sheds, garages and vacant houses. The Fire Department's Senior Inspector noted at the time that it was the highest number of fires he had seen in a one-month period in his 10 years of service as a Fire Inspector and Investigator. This amounted to 24 structure fires and 40 garbage fires, twice the

previous average. The level and nature of this fire problem posed a significant risk to the community and was therefore identified by everyone involved, as a major problem that needed to be addressed. These deliberately set fires were especially concerning in light of the fact that half of all the unintentional house fires and half of all fire related deaths in the City of Regina were already occurring in the North Central neighborhood.

This was the beginning of the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee and ongoing activities that were developed to respond to this problem.

## **ANALYSIS**

It has been identified by both the police and fire fighters that young children in the neighborhood are setting these fires. These children generally live in families with little structure, are skipping school, and are setting fires, including fires in sheds, garages and unoccupied homes. These children are relatively young, in the eight to 12 year age group, and are starting to get involved in a number of criminal activities, including fire setting. When the children are identified in groups the leaders tend to be about 12 years old.

Absentee parenting is one of the social issues common to this neighborhood, a situation which leaves many young children alone in the neighborhood at night, unsupervised and with very little to do. This is as a result of many factors that cause the parents to either be physically absent, or as a result of significant drug and alcohol abuse, emotionally or psychologically absent. There is little sports or other programming opportunities for these children outside of regular school hours.

Prior to this problem being identified and targeted garbage fires tended to be viewed as nuisance or mischief activities. Once the group started meeting this view started to change. The behavior of these children started to be viewed as criminal behavior.

The importance of intervening and stopping the firesetting behavior early was also recognized, as it was clear that without intervention, the fire setting behavior was escalating from garbage containers to structures and homes. The danger these activities posed, and the already high number of fire deaths in this community, also highlighted the need for education around the issues of fire prevention and survival.



Another issue within the community is the transience of its population. The neighborhood houses a large Aboriginal population, a large portion of which moves back and forth between First Nations. There is also much transience within the community. In the 2000\2001 academic year, for example, the four elementary schools experienced a 50 per cent changeover in their student populations, the largest rate to date.

This movement creates what is known in the fire service as a large fire load, or more simply, things that can burn. Many families leave mattresses, chairs and couches next to back alley garbage containers when they move, as they do not have the resources to move all their belongings with them. These items are not picked up with the regular garbage collection, and become fires in waiting. Moving also generates a large amount of garbage, again becoming a large fire load. In walking down the back alleys on many nights, the garbage containers are spilling over. There's much to be lit on fire, and it's easy to do.

in 1999 there was a total of 453 garbage fires in Regina. One-third, or 167 of these fires occurred in North Central. This is only slightly higher than the 146 garbage fires in North Central in 1995.

Things changed dramatically in 2000 when the overall city garbage fire total jumped to 638 garbage fires. Nearly the entire city increase over 1999 levels occurred in North Central alone, which had 315 or half of the city's garbage fires, up from one-third of the city's total a year earlier. (see figure #1, #2, #3)

The level of garbage fire activity in May, and again in August, tends to be a precursor to the level of fire activity in October. In 1999, for example, there were 16 garbage fires in North Central in May. This figure climbed to 19 in August, and peaked at 40 in October. In 2000 there were 42 garbage fires in May, 46 in August and 78 in October, indicating an overall increasing trend. (see figure #4)

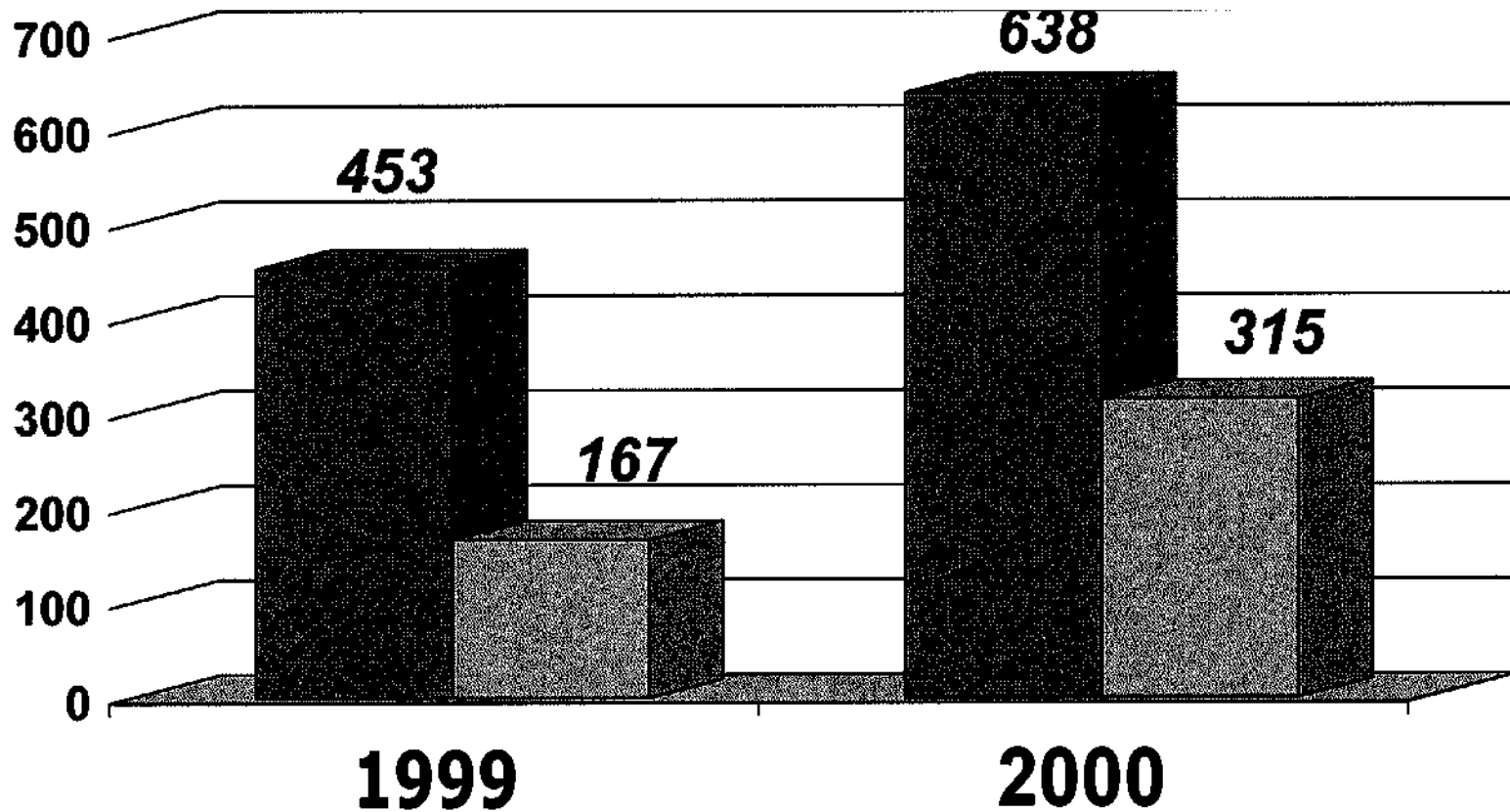
In 2001 there were 64 garbage fires in May, and 65 in August. Given these figures it was expected the garbage fire problem would escalate dramatically in October. This did not occur.

In looking at where the garbage fires were occurring and when, it appears most are being set on the 1000 to 1300 blocks of Retallack, Rae, Cameron and Robinson Streets. The majority of these fires are set between 8:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.. (see figure #5, #6)

The garbage pick-up day for the majority of the neighborhood was Monday. The busiest times for fires were Saturday and Sunday nights.

# Garbage Fires

City of Regina  
1999 and 2000



City of Regina  
B North Central Neighborhood

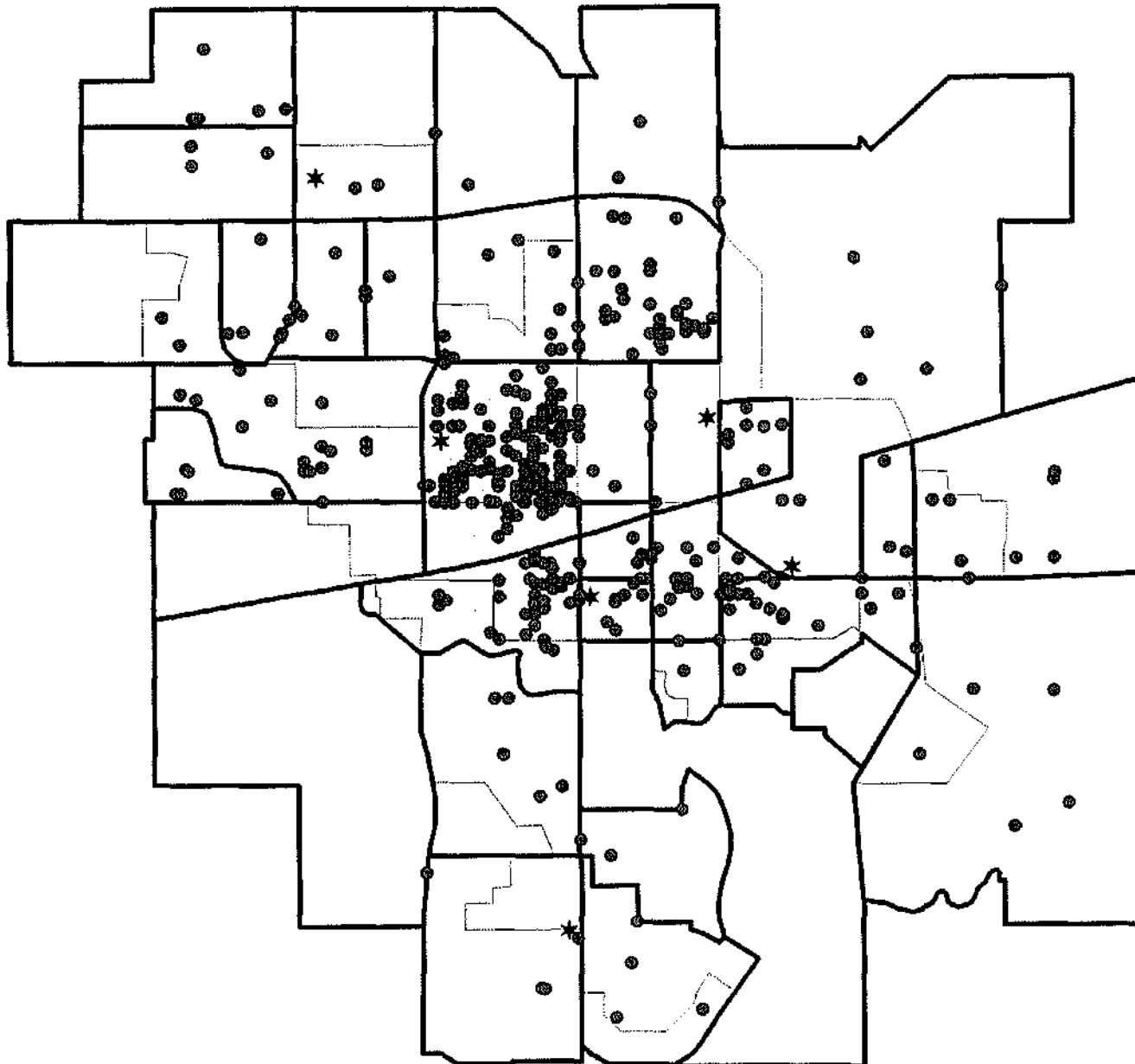
*w In 1999 one-third of the city's garbage fires were started in North Central*

*In 2000 half of the city's garbage fires were started in North Central*

*ri 80 per cent of the city's increase in garbage fires 1999 - 2000 occurred in North Central*

# Garbage Fire Responses - 1999

By Neighbourhood



**Legend:**

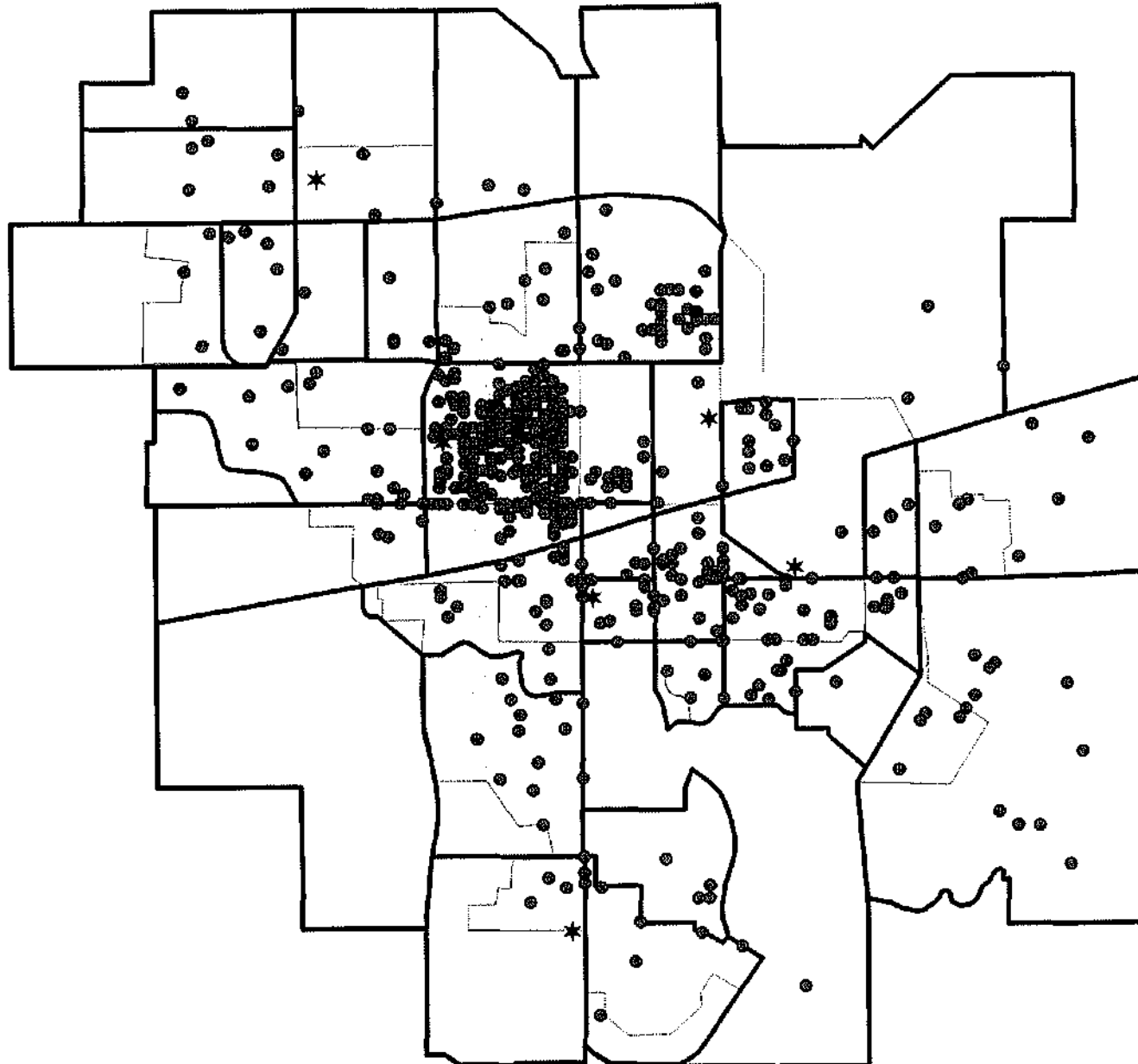
- Garbage Fire Responses (450)
- \* - Fire Station
- Automated Residential Collection Areas



January, 2000

# Garbage Fire Responses - 2000

By Neighbourhood



**Legend:**

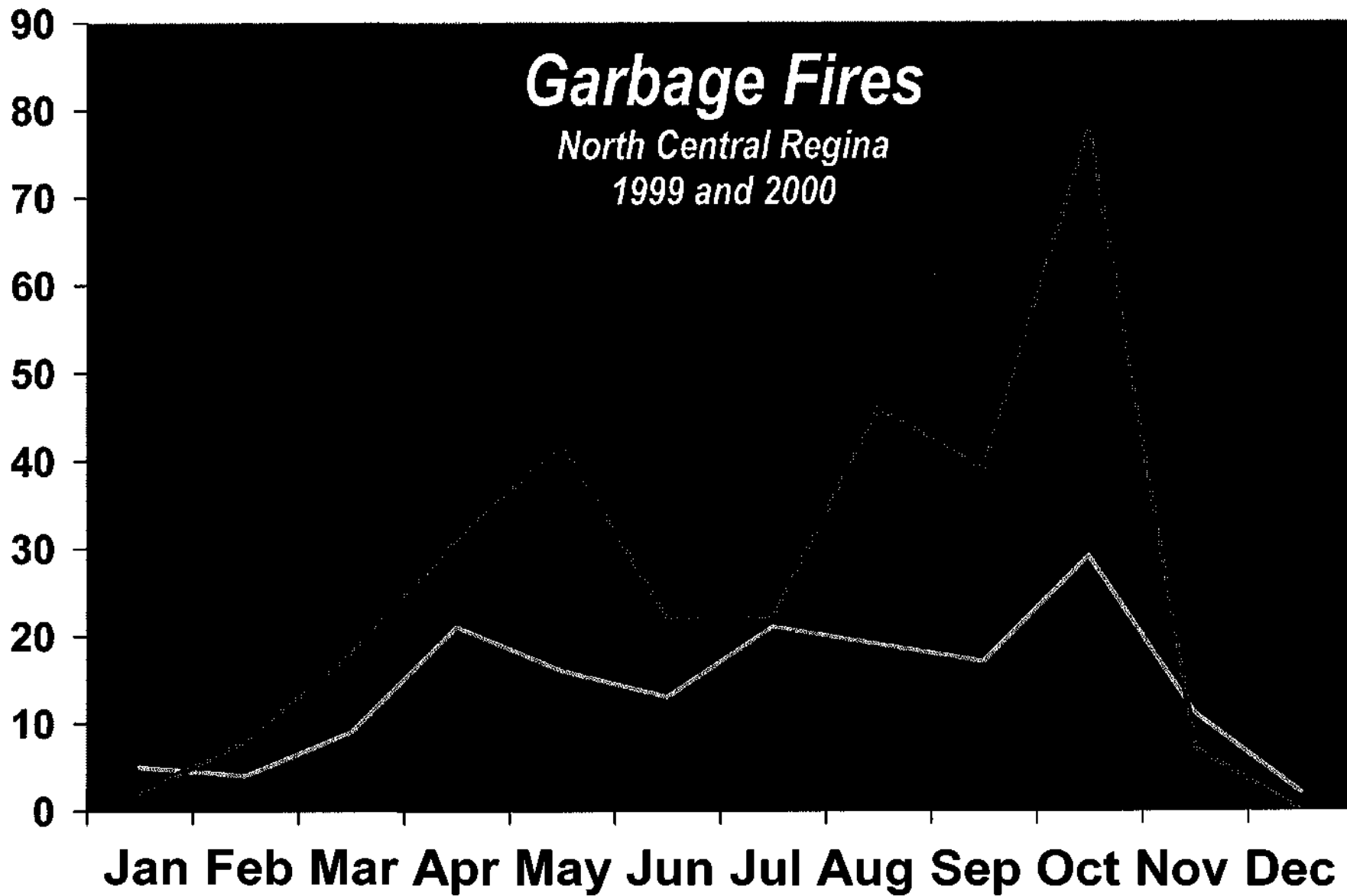
- Garbage Fire Responses (632)

\* - Fire Station

Automated Residential  
Collection Areas



January, 2001



**-2000**



Figure #5

a) Ga-EZ (1) 03 North Central

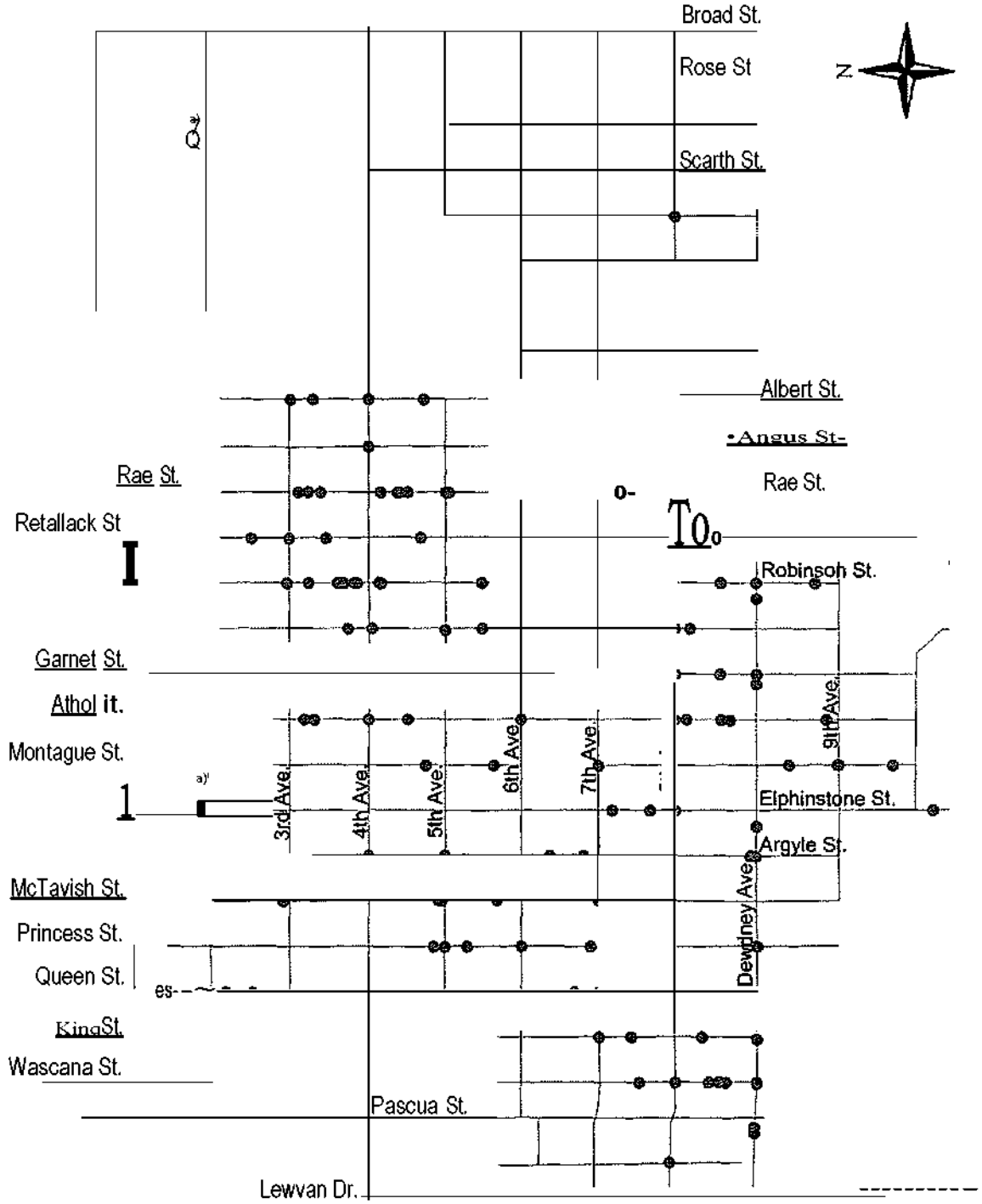
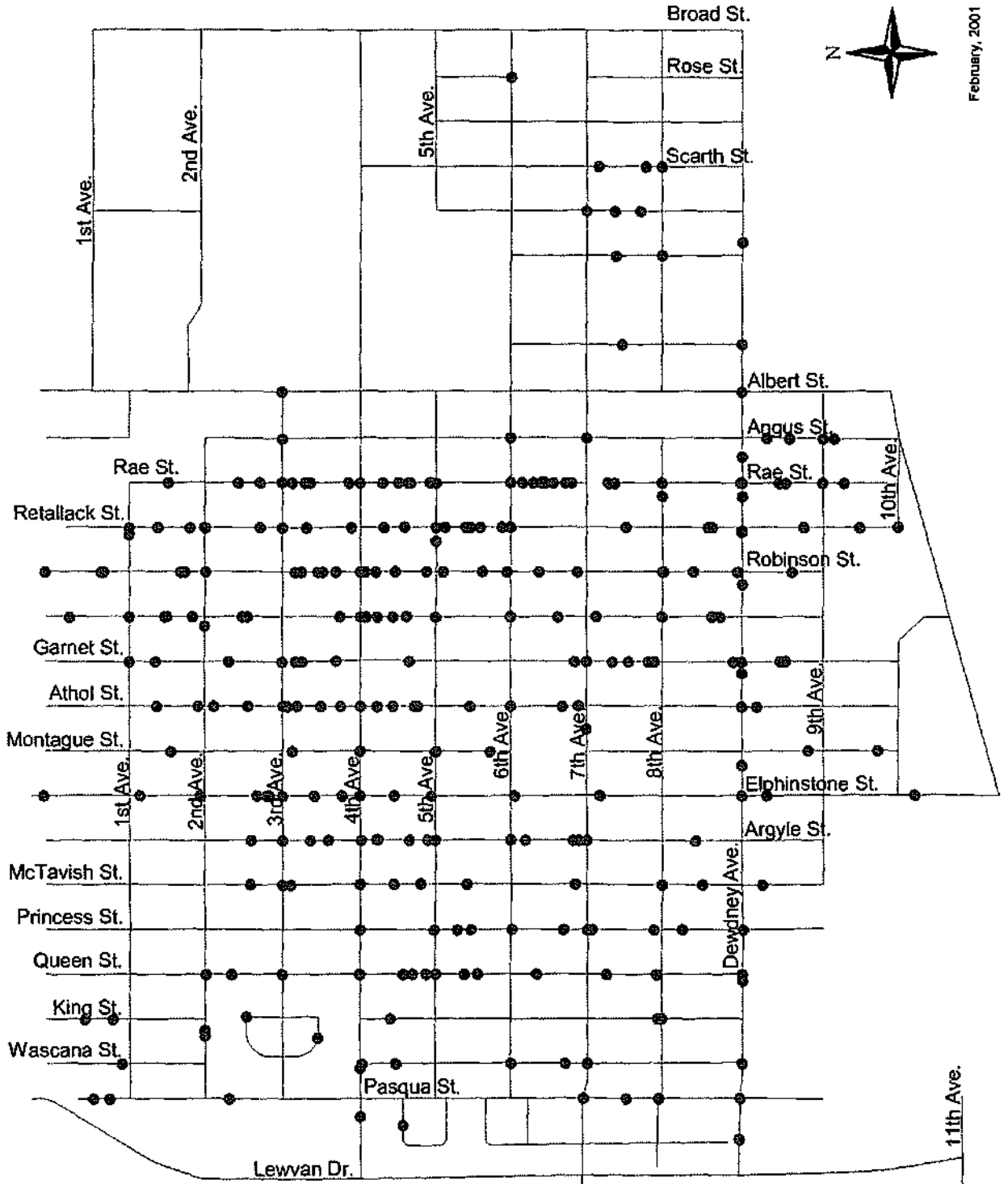




Figure #6

# Garbage Fires North Central Neighbourhood - 2000



## RESPONSE

In addition to the initial recognition of the increase in North Central fires, there was a significant event that occurred which prompted the formation of the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee and the subsequent activities to respond to the problem.

The incident occurred one noon hour when the Fire Department was called to put out a house fire in the neighborhood. A number of children at the scene, watching the activity unfold, gave the Fire Department's Manager of Public Education the names of several children who they said had started the fire. The fire setters were students at Kitchener Community School. With the help of the school's Principal, the students were identified to the Regina Police Service. The coordinated activities that occurred following this incident, highlighted the importance of a multi-disciplinary response to the overall fire problem.

The Fire Department called a meeting of North Central community members and organizations in an effort to get the various people involved in combating the fire problem together at one table. The first meeting was held on November 18, 1999. Those who attended included members from the Regina Police Service, the City of Regina's Social Development Unit, the Principal from Kitchener Community School, and various members of the Regina Fire Department. The goal of the first meeting was "to get the various people involved with this serious fire problem together so they could tackle it collectively and in a coordinated way".

Since the first meeting the Committee has met a total of 13 times, and its membership has been expanded to include the other three neighborhood elementary schools, the neighborhood high school, the city's Public Works and Bylaw Enforcement Departments, and the provincial Department of Social Services.

Nearly a year later in September of 2000, another significant event occurred in this story. Two of the officers from the North Central Community Service Centre responded to a complaint from a North Central restaurant that there were kids hanging around causing problems and one of the children burned a hole through a gum ball machine. The subsequent investigation uncovered that the e t aara ?aiires,r North community. A multi-agency approach was = lri ^•eaing with is issue. The fire department hosted a meeting where the police, social services and the school were involved, and as well the incident was discussed by the Committee.



Since that first meeting in November 1999, the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee has undertaken a number of activities and initiatives in the North Central community. These activities and initiatives include the following.

### **Weekly Fire Report**

The first gap identified by the group was the need to share information. While the School Principals often knew which students were involved in setting fires, they didn't know who to pass this information to. Similarly, while the Fire Department responded to put the fires out, they initiated very little contact with the Police Service because the fires were not yet viewed as criminal activity. The Police Service, charged with the mandate to investigate and prosecute criminal activity, wasn't being made aware of the problem, let alone its extent. There was little if any communication between the involved organizations regarding this issue.

In response to the need for increased communication, the Fire Department began producing a weekly fire activity report for the North Central neighborhood, and distributing it to each member of the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee. Since then the reports have included monthly maps pinpointing this activity, which the Police Service distributes to its operational personnel on all four shifts, as well as the North Central problem-solving personnel. This was the first, and one of the most significant, efforts at a coordinated community response to the fire problem.

Part of the benefit of these reports is that it allows the various groups to be aware of fire activity in a timely manner, and to address it quickly and in a coordinated way. This has resulted in increased police involvement. The Police Service has apprehended a number of youth involved in fire setting. This has had a dual impact on the community. First, fire setters have been caught and their activities have stopped. Some fire setters, for example, admitted to having started more than 100 garbage fires. Secondly, the message has been made clear throughout the community that fire setting is being viewed as - and is being treated as — a serious problem, and that those who are caught must pay the consequences for their actions. This message alone acts as a deterrent.

### **Visual Identity and Logo**

Another one of the first things the Committee did was establish a visual identity through a logo.

The logo identified what the group was trying to do, that is, work toward a safer community by having agencies provide support to the family.

### **Elementary Schools Program**

The Committee also decided to develop a program for the elementary school students. The group felt the Program should include three components:

Prevention: information about how the students can prevent fires, and what they can do to help their brothers and sisters prevent fires

Survival: information about how the students can escape and survive if there is a fire in their home, and how they can help sisters and brothers escape and survive

Fire setting: impact on the students in motivating them to not set fires, to understand the consequences of fire setting on themselves and the community, and to make good choices and act responsibly

While the Committee's focus was in combating the fire setting activities, it believed the fire prevention and survival education components were equally important, as half of the city's residential fires and half of the city's fire fatalities occur in North Central alone.

It was decided to run two interactive activity stations for each student to participate in, at each of the four schools:

Station 1: Fire Prevention and Survival Station  
This station consisted of a smoke tunnel which taught the students how to escape a burning house, a 911 telephone which gave each student the opportunity to actually go through the 911 call process, and a firefighting activity where firefighters showed the students what protective equipment they wear, and how they respond to fires.

Station 2: Responsibility Station  
This station was run by a police officer and a firefighter, who led the students through a discussion on the consequences of fire setting.

The key to the success of this Program was the scheduling done by the schools, which divided the student body up into family groups. This meant the older brother in grade six, for example, was teamed up with his younger grade three sister and younger kindergarten brother. It also meant the school was entirely disrupted for the day and a half needed to run the Program.

The second key to this Program was keeping the groups small - none larger than 30 participants - and inviting the parents\caregivers to take part with their children. This type of grouping allowed the family units to participate together. It also taught the older students to understand their roles and responsibilities with younger siblings, which was very important given that an older brother or sister looking after younger ones, could be as young as eight or nine himself or herself.

To date this Program has been delivered twice, in the spring of 2000 and 2001, and is being scheduled to run again in April 2002. Over one thousand students and over one hundred parents from four community schools have participated.

### **Garbage Fire Video**

Sacred Heart School produced a 15-minute video depicting a garbage fire re-enactment. It was shot in the community, with local children and local members of the emergency services. The video shows three children involved in setting a garbage fire, and follows the consequences they must face for this behavior. It was used as the catalyst or jumping off point for the Responsibility Station discussion.

The video made a significant impact on the students, in large part because they recognized their own neighborhood, and the players in the video.

### **Pre-Kindergarten Program**

Building on the success of the elementary school program the group decided there was a need to reach out to students when they first started school, to influence them toward positive behaviors before they were led into damaging fire setting behaviors by older students. The group targeted the pre-kindergarten students as they first started school.

As sub-committee of pre-kindergarten teachers, a police officer and a member of the Fire Department developed the concept of a Walking Field Trip.

In developing this Program they felt it was important to incorporate a number of key factors:

- it had to involve the parents
- the teachers had to prepare the students in advance
- the fire and police personnel would reinforce those lessons
- an informal atmosphere
- simple interaction between the students and their parents, as well as fire and police personnel - a chance to establish relationships
- it had to incorporate visual and tangible safety lessons
- and it had to be short - not more than an hour

The teachers prepared the students in advance with the Learn Not To Burn Preschool Program. Then a firefighter and a police officer met the teacher, the students and their parents in the classroom, from which they walked along to the neighborhood Community Police Service Centre. Along the way they discovered and learned a number of natural safety lessons:

ie: crossing a street safely  
 staying away from dogs  
 staying out of back alleys  
 what garbage fires were, how they could hurt

They were also introduced to a special safety lesson: what to do if they found a needle. Discarded needles are a serious problem in North Central and around North Central schools. A needle was 'planted' along the route. Someone from the group - usually a student - called 911 from the scene by cell phone. A fire truck responded to take the needle away. In this way the students learned what not to do (don't touch) and also what to do (ask an adult to call 911). The firefighters who arrived also interacted with the group.

The Walking Field Trip not only taught the students tangible, visual safety lessons, it also showed them that fire and police are part of their neighborhood and that they work together with their teachers and their parents. And it showed the parents what and how they should be teaching their children.

Once at the Police Service Centre the students along with their parents and teachers, had a chance to meet the police officers. This was an opportunity for a positive interaction between the family and police, and it identified the Service Center as a safe place for the children to go if they are scared.

The consensus of those involved is that the Program not only meets its goals with the students, it also fosters a more positive relationship between fire and police, two agencies who don't often have a chance to work on positive projects together. Fire and police also gained a better understanding of the classroom, how teachers work, and how they can work with teachers.

An additional spin-off is that several of the teachers developed Literacy Boxes built on the fire safety theme. These boxes which are filled with books, games and other activities, are used by the teacher to encourage reading and interaction between the students and their family members. This has resulted in an outreach from the school to the home.

The Walking Field Trip was delivered in the fall of 2000, and 2001 expanded to include the kindergarten students and teachers. To date twenty five classes have participated in this program.

### **Christmas Card - Magnet - Sports Program Insert**

The Christmas of 2000 and 2001 saw every teacher in the four community schools send a Christmas card to each of their students. These cards had the Keeping Our Community Safe logo printed on the front, and contained a fridge magnet, again with the logo. The teachers personalized each card, inserting a special message for each student. The City's Social Development Unit also inserted a special calendar showing what sports programming was available to the students in the North Central community over the Christmas holiday break, with the desire to get the children involved in activities available in the community.

### **Garbage Pickup Rescheduling**

The City's Public Works Department garbage pickup schedule for most North Central residents was Mondays. Most of the garbage fires occurred on the weekend. In an effort to decrease the number of fires being set on weekends, the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee lobbied the Public Works Department to change its pickup schedule to a date later in the week. The rationale was that without anything to burn, the number of fires on the weekend would decrease.

In mid-June 2001, Public Works changed its pickup schedule from Monday to Friday. The preliminary results indicated a shift in the fire pattern, however as time passed the overall number of fires decreased.

In addition to issues related to garbage pickup times, it was identified in the committee that different city departments were responsible for garbage, and refuse such as couches and mattresses that are usually discarded at the end of every month when people move. In response to the concerns which were identified with delays in getting these large items removed in a timely fashion, the city bylaw enforcement section entered into an agreement with a local

young offender program operated by the local Tribal Council, to have young offenders employed to pick these items up on an ongoing basis, and in response to calls for service from the police or others.

The North Central Community Society has also been involved in cleaning up the area. Each spring a North Central Cleanup project is organized for one day by this community association. The project does not pick up regular garbage; its only focus is on large items left in the lanes such as couches, chairs and mattresses. In the year 2000 the project removed 56 tons of garbage from North Central and in 2001 approximately 30 tons of garbage was removed. It was a very positive sign that less garbage was available in 2001 and this was attributed to the Bylaw Enforcement office initiative.

The extra attention to the issue of garbage in North Central has had a very positive impact. Lanes that were once littered with garbage, the fuel for these fires, are now much cleaner and safer than before.

### **Fire Department Response Policy Change**

The Fire Department has recently started to change its response policy to garbage fires, often responding without lights and sirens. This takes much of the excitement away for the children and youth who started the fires, in turn taking away much of their motivation for starting the fires in the first place. This type of response also makes it easier to find and identify those children and youth who started the fires.

### **Coordinated Fire and Police Response - Service Delivery Changes**

The Fire Department and Police Service have developed changes to their respective response policies for garbage fires. Fire dispatch notify police dispatch immediately of any garbage fires. Police communications in turn, will direct any available police unit in the area to respond jointly with the Fire Department.

Reporting of minor fire incidents will occur between the records areas of each department. This will insure that the Police Service will now have incident reports of these incidents that they never had before. This is in keeping with the shift in philosophy regarding garbage fires, away from the idea that they are simply nuisance or mischief incidents, and toward the idea that they are crimes. For the first time the message to the community is that there is police involvement in response to fire setting activities.

## **Truancy Project**

Many children get "lost" in the system as they move frequently, not only within North Central but also from First Nations to the city and back. The Truancy Project is designed to ensure that children are in school, and remain in school. The project began with a proposal developed by a North Central school principal on the Committee, to obtain funding to staff a special "attendance officer". This way children are brought back to school, and the stability it offers in their lives. Funding has been approved for this project.

## **Garbage Container Artwork Project**

A majority of the garbage containers in North Central have been burned out. They are one of the most visible signs of neighborhood decay in the area.

The group has discussed the merit of developing an artwork program for the garbage containers. By involving the students, it was felt they would feel an investment in the containers and be less likely to damage them with fire.

Other artwork within the community - and by the community — has been respected by children and youth.

This is a longer-term project that will require a community-wide process. The group has formed a sub-committee that is working on developing this project.

## **Problem Oriented Approach - North Central Community Service Centre**

The North Central Community Service Centre has been refining its approach to problem solving since it opened in 1999. Improvements in the process have been ongoing. Computer programs allow for regular ongoing scanning of calls for service and submitted incidents to identify locations where there are repeat calls for service. Once these locations are identified they are assigned to Centre officers to identify the root cause of the problems and implement solutions, often using a multi- agency approach. A specially designed form based on the SARA model is used to guide and record these efforts.

Major ongoing issues or community concerns have also been identified, and one officer from each shift at the Service Centre has been assigned to coordinate persistent efforts at resolving these issues. These assignments include the identification of "hot spots", as well as the coordination of projects targeting prostitution, repeat offenders, and of course, North Central fires.

There have been significantly improved results with the fire investigations since responsibility has been assigned to coordinate activities related to this specific problem. The investigative component is enhanced by all the other efforts that have been undertaken, especially the service delivery changes and the weekly fire report. The dedication of personnel to coordinate the response to this issue has also made it easier for the Fire Department because they now have one identified contact working at the Centre each day.

In the fall of 2001 the North Central Area problem was assigned to one constable to coordinate. This was done in anticipation of an exceptionally high fire month in October of 2001, due to the trends that had been identified in earlier years. This officer dedicated one of his shifts per working block to this problem. He attended all the elementary schools in North Central to share information on the fire problem and known suspects. He worked with the school principals to jointly prepare public address announcements to be broadcast to all classes in the schools. The announcements focused on enforcement and encouraged students to come forward with any information on the fire problem. In the weeks that followed he returned to the schools and spoke informally with all the students that were suspected of starting fires. It would appear these steps had a very positive impact as the October 2001 peak never materialized.

The Police Service and other members of the Committee also recognized a problem in dealing with children under 12 years of age who light fires or are in other types of conflict with the law and the community. As a result of this the Department of Social Services was asked to participate in the committee in the fall of 2001. Many of these children do not fit the criteria for intervention by Social Services however, so there was a desire to develop some additional responses.

A meeting was held early in 2002 with a sub-committee to deal with this issue. It involved Social Services, Regina Police Service, Fire Department and North Central school Principals. All agencies agreed on a process of involvement with each other when these children are identified. The result of this agreement will mean a more coordinated approach in finding services to assist families and in finding alternative measures for dealing with the youth. It will be an attempt at tailoring a solution for each young person dependent on the underlying cause of the problem. This process recognizes that the schools are a hub in the lives of these children and need to be involved in issues affecting them.



## ASSESSMENT

The Keeping Our Community Safe Committee and related projects can be assessed in many ways.

This project is very significant from a problem oriented policing perspective in that it truly involves a community response that has not been driven by the Police Service, but one in which the Police Service plays an integral role. There is also a consensus among partners that this project would not have been as successful, had it not been for the existence of the North Central Community Service Centre. The Centre, having police officers and other agencies with a community and problem solving focus, has been one of the main keys to success.

The program has been a huge success from a Fire Department perspective in that not only has it successfully reduced the number of minor fires in the area, but as the instigators and coordinators of the project, they have successfully brought the community together to focus on a community problem.

The school principals have also recognized significant success through the committee. This is evidenced by the fact that the Principal of Albert School, with support from the Public School Board office, forwarded a proposal to present the Keeping Our Community Safe initiative at the World Conference on Community Education. The proposal was accepted. Three of the four Community School Principals along with a police officer and a member of the Fire Department made the presentation in May of 2001 in British Columbia.

Garbage in lanes, once one of the most visible signs of neighborhood decay in the area has almost been eliminated. One of the other most visible signs of decay, burned out garbage containers, will be targeted through the Garbage Container Artwork Project.

An analysis of the fire statistics indicate that past trends related to North Central fires have been changed, and the problem is now under control. This is due to the ongoing preventative programming and the investigative response, which has been built and is in place to deal with fires as they occur. The October 2001 peak which was predicted to be much higher than the October 2000 peak of 78 fires never materialized, and instead there were only 26 fires for the month. This positive trend has continued with a total of only 18 fires in the first three months of 2002. In addition to this, the last fire related fatality in North Central occurred in December of 2000. (see figure #7)

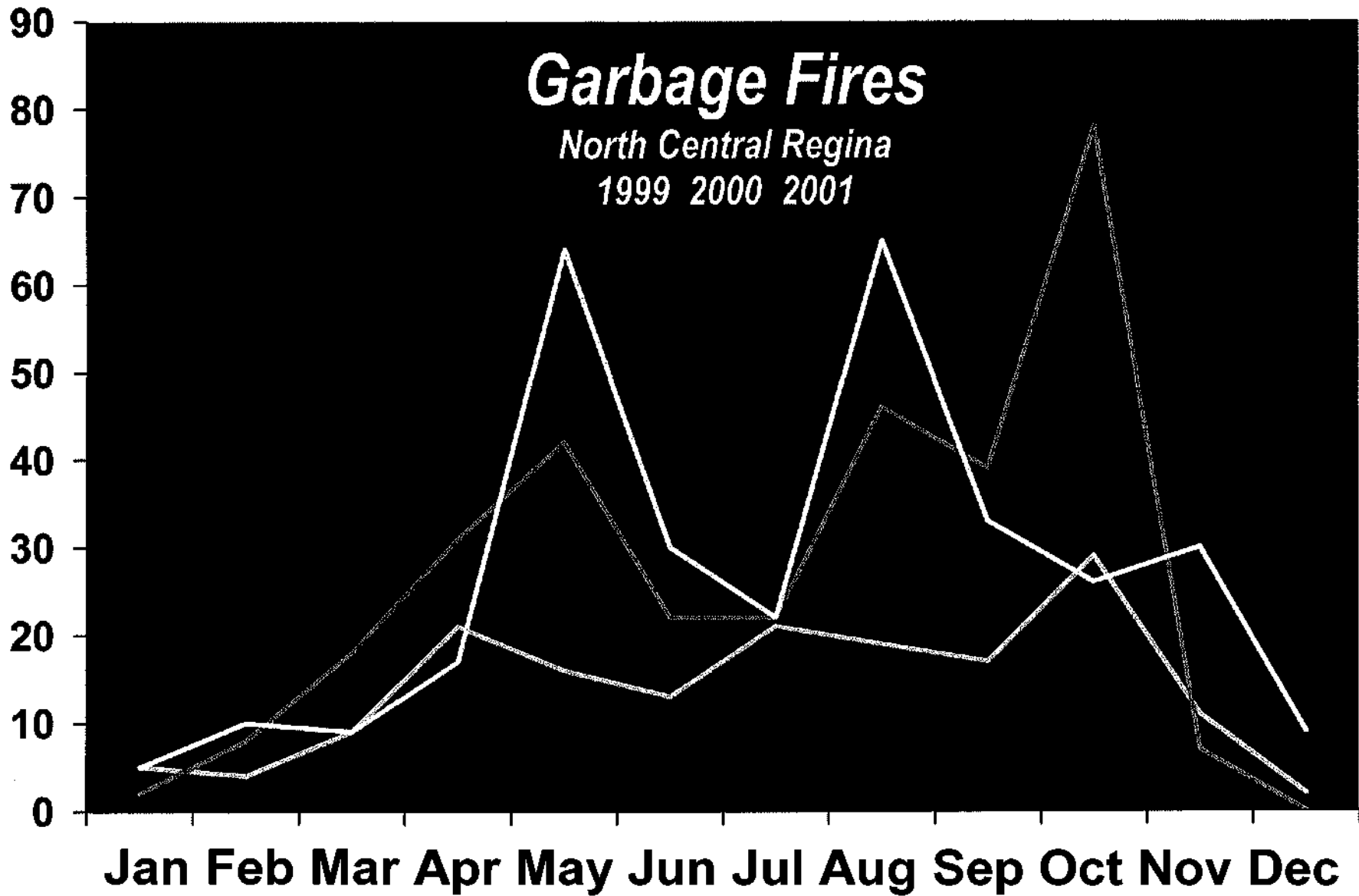
There is some displacement that appears to be occurring. While the October 2001 fire peak did not occur, and the overall numbers of fires in North Central

are down slightly for 2001, the fires are up approximately ten percent for the city overall. If this increase in the number of fires in other parts of the city is identified as a trend, our experience from North Central will be valuable in responding to these new challenges. (see figure #8, #9)

We believe it is this combination of prevention and enforcement that has finally made a significant impact on the problem.

## **CONCLUSION**

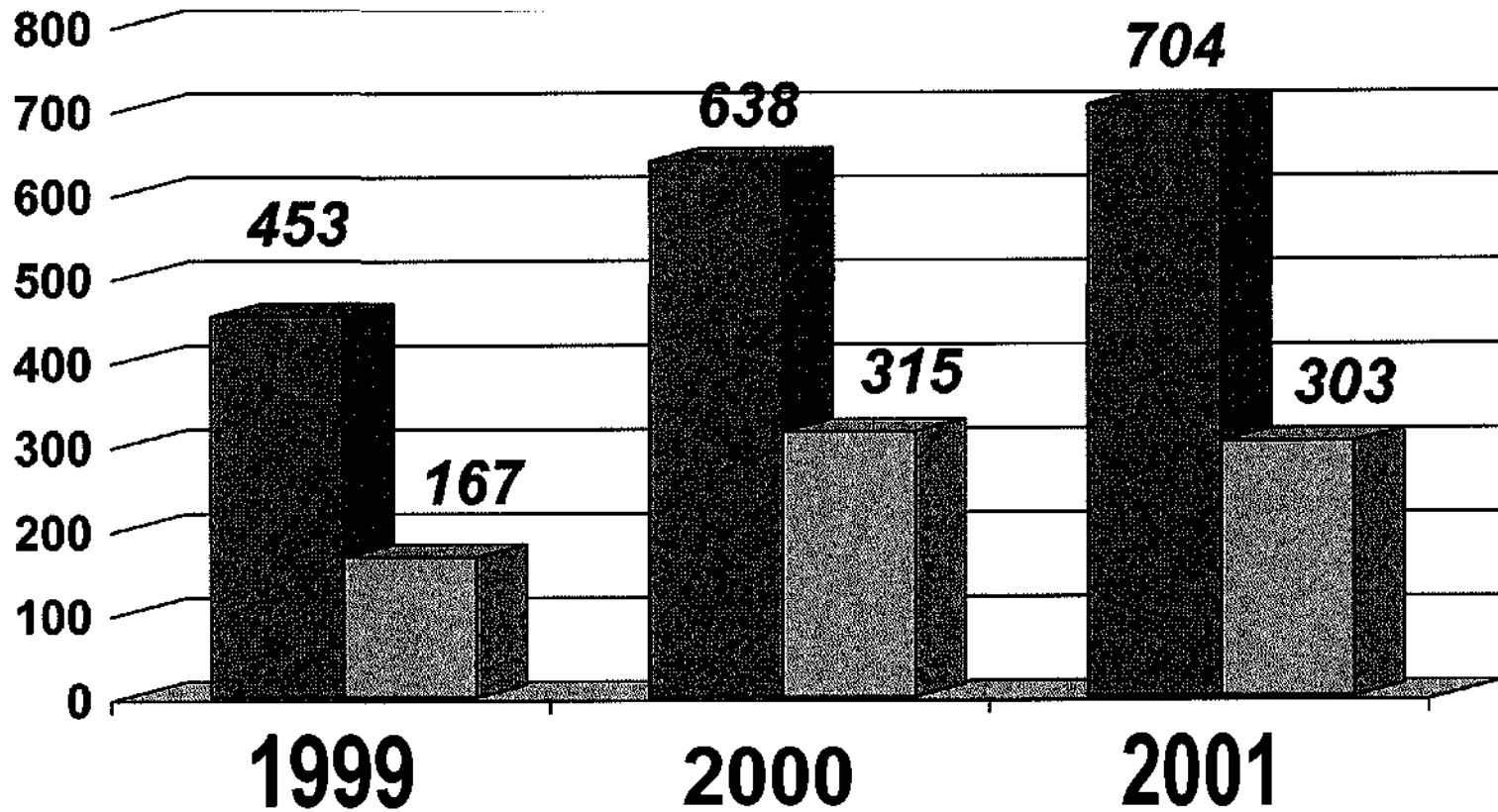
The Keeping Our Community Safe Committee, with the work it has accomplished, has had a significant impact on the community, community relationships and the North Central fire problem. It has accomplished this through one of the cornerstones of community development, community policing and problem solving, that being effective relationship building.



2001

# Garbage Fires

*City of Regina*  
*1999 2000 2001*



City of Regina  
North Central Neighborhood

*In 1999 one-third of the city's garbage fires were started in North Central*

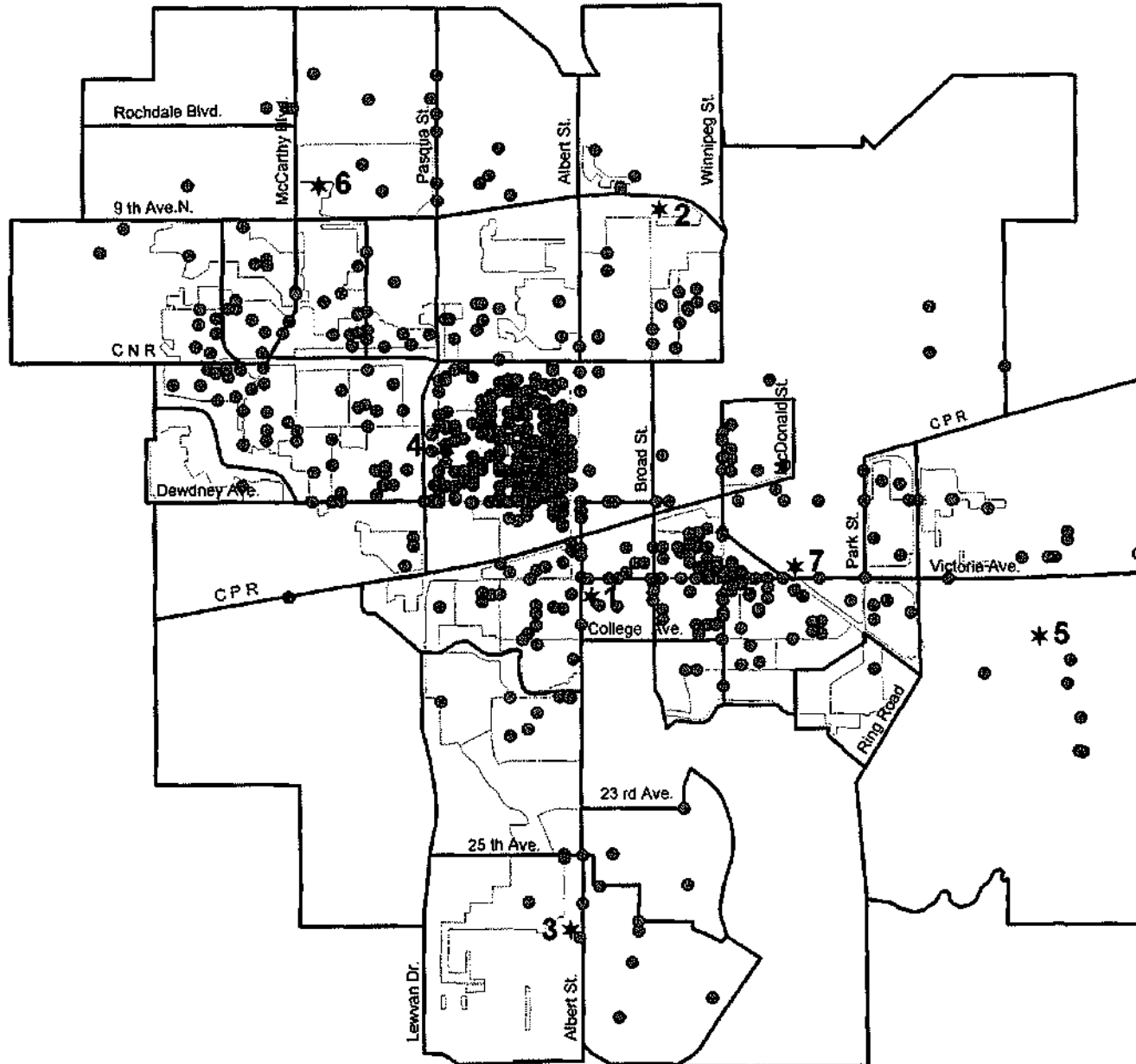
*In 2000 half of the city's garbage fires were started in North Central - nearly double the 1999 level*

*80 per cent of the city's increase in garbage fires 1999 - 2000 occurred in North Central*

*In 2001 the number of garbage fires in North Central decreased over the previous year's level*

# Garbage Fire Responses - 2001

By Neighbourhood



**Legend:**

- Garbage Fire Responses (704)
- \* - Fire Station
- Alley Automated Collection Areas



January, 2002

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Regina Police Service wishes to acknowledge the Regina Fire Department for developing and maintaining the Keeping Our Community Safe Committee. Much of this submission was derived from the collective work of Committee members who also deserve recognition.

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information on this project please contact:

Staff Sergeant Barry Guy  
Regina Police Service  
1717 Osier Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4P 3W3

Phone (306) 777-6625  
E-Mail - [bquy@police.regina.sk.ca](mailto:bquy@police.regina.sk.ca)

Angela Prawzick  
Public Education Officer  
Regina Fire Department  
1205 Ross Avenue  
Regina Saskatchewan  
S4P 3C8

Phone (306) 777-7861  
E-Mail W [APRAWZLC@cityregina.com](mailto:APRAWZLC@cityregina.com)