



**City of Citrus Heights  
Citrus Heights Police Department  
Goldstein Submission 2010**



# Goodbye Sayonara



Problem Oriented Policing Unit  
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# Goodbye Sayonara

## SUMMARY

### *Scan*

Sayonara Drive has been one of the most violent, crime ridden areas in all of Sacramento County. For decades, the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department has responded to calls for service to the street. Shootings, drug dealing, gangs are just samples of activities that were commonplace here.

### *Analysis*

The City of Citrus Heights incorporated in 1997. While taking ownership, the city immediately began working on changing its image. Their goal was to improve the quality of life for the residents and foster a business friendly environment. Their focus was immediately drawn to Sayonara Drive. This street's reputation for violence was a negative stigma which tarnished the entire city's image.

The Sheriff's Department, under contract with the city, focused proactive patrols into the area. These patrols had temporary and limited success. The criminal element would quiet down for a short time but the problems would remain. As soon as other law enforcement issues took police away from the area, crime would escalate.

It became clear that collaboration between the city and the community was needed for long lasting improvement.

### *Response*

A strategic plan was developed to coordinate the efforts of the city, the police department, the community, various interest groups, and the federal government to permanently impact the quality of life issues plaguing Sayonara Drive. This comprehensive plan covered a host of issues from basic environmental improvements to the purchase, demolition, and rehabilitation of some of the worst properties in the area.

The city's Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP), consisting of code enforcement officers, grant-writers, and representatives from the general services division, played a crucial role in this plan. They secured funding for community redevelopment from various sources including the federal government. They worked with stakeholders in the area to correct existing municipal code violations. They developed and implemented a traffic control plan and improved area lighting.

The new Citrus Heights Police Department launched in 2006. They quickly took their place on the team and began to impact additional quality of life issues. Community policing was a corporate policy which permeated the entire department. Patrol officers, traffic officers, school resource officers, narcotic detectives, gang enforcement detectives, parole, and probation officers all worked together to impact the criminal element on the street through aggressive enforcement.

In 2008 the department's first Problem Oriented Policing Unit (POP) was launched. These POP officers enhanced the law enforcement effort on this street by soliciting involvement from the citizens. The POP officers educated the citizen and encouraged them to report issue as they were occurring. They helped to form the street's first neighborhood watch program, helped with the after school community center, and became trusted confidants of area residents. They conducted a survey to elicit the citizen's concerns and perceptions relating to their quality of life. They also worked closely with NEP to bring problem properties into compliance through education, enforcement, and abatement procedures.

#### *Assessment*

Calls for service to the Police Department have increased over the past four years (540 in 2006 to 859 in 2009). These statistics show an increase in crime reporting while also showing a sharp downward trend in violent crime. Research of these calls reveals that "911" calls and proactive contacts have increased two-fold, while assaults have decreased by as much as 80%-90%. The Police Department identified the criminal targets and utilized not only its own staff, but outside agency assistance to arrest these offenders.

Once the primary offenders were removed, the Police Department worked aggressively with Code Enforcement to address all code violations. These efforts eventually caused long time owners and absentee landlords to both comply with the City and in some cases, sell their properties.

Today, with the existing housing market, a solid financial base, and several federal grants the City of Citrus Heights has purchased 15 of the 40 buildings on the street. Property value has allowed the city to continue to purchase and to control the future direction of the area.

Additionally, the city received a grant for a community park and has had the children of Sayonara participate in its design. The residents are reporting a safer perception of the area and have begun to walk around and enjoy their street again. Sayonara Drive is scheduled to receive a new name this fall, so it appears the city will say "sayonara" to their past stigma and "konnichiwa" to restored quality of life.

## DESCRIPTION

After a 10 year battle with the county of Sacramento to achieve cityhood, Citrus Heights incorporated in 1997. It is approximately 14.4 sq miles with residential and commercial development. There is a large multi-family housing population here as well (52 Multi-family properties).

The city's first Mayor William Hughes, first major goal was to improve the safety and living conditions throughout the city. Mayor Hughes began partnering with organizations that provide services in the city, and looked to utilize these services to better the city and enhance partnerships. Immediately addressed were social services, parks and recreation, beautification measures, and business-economic development.

As can be imagined, crime and police services were of major concern. The City of Citrus Heights was recognized by a, crime ridden, *three block* multi-family housing area called Sayonara Drive.



The number of calls for police service on Sayonara Drive were 32 times the number of calls for service for the *entire* City on average. Something needed to be done quickly. Like so many other crime ridden areas, Sayonara Drive was no exception. Open air drug markets, shootings, felony assaults, and multiple gang sets plagued this street.

The City of Citrus Heights initially contracted police services from the Sacramento Sheriffs' Department. The Sheriff's Department's response to crime on Sayonara Drive was high impact patrol with a focus on proactive arrests. They saw limited and temporary success. Proactive arrests only slowed crime for a time. Crime came back very quickly and there did not appear to be any lasting impact on the overall quality of life in the neighborhood.

With limited police resources, Mayor Hughes and the city set out to address the crime and nuisance problems on Sayonara Drive in other ways. He developed a Strategic Plan that was intended to identify actions and provide direction for long term solutions to the area's problems.

Mayor Hughes' priority was to develop a Property Owners Association. Blight, garbage, and run down properties described virtually every property. Property owners commented that their problems were similar with each other. Common issues included problem tenants being "passed around", traffic issues such as speeding, poor lighting, deteriorated buildings, and overcrowding.

The idea was to have the Association engage in certain aspects of common management and control of the social and physical quality of the properties through common rental agreements and Codes Covenants and Restrictions (CC&R), which were to be levied against the properties.

Over the course of a few weeks however, the property owners declined such formal processes and chose to continue a less formal arrangement. The group of owners agreed to meet regularly in strictly voluntary actions to improve the physical and social environment.

While the Sheriff's Department continued to combat the crime issues on Sayonara, the city's efforts continued as well. Officials participated in community workshops, brainstorming meetings with social service providers, meetings with Housing and Redevelopment agencies, and door to door surveys of area residents.

Keeping with the idea of community involvement and partnerships, city officials proctored multiple workshops (1998). Unfortunately, only 40 people attended.

Those residents that did participate responded to a list of questions and prioritized their responses. Questions such as:

- “What type of services could you or your neighbors utilize if available?”
- “What are the 3 top problems in your living conditions?”
- “What are the 3 top social problems in your neighborhood?”
- “What could residents do to help address the problems or needs?”
- “List three physical improvements to help improve security.”
- “List three physical improvements to help the neighborhood”.

Results of these questions indicated that the top concerns for citizens of this street were aesthetic improvements such as lighting, security concerns such as curbing crime and gangs, traffic concerns such as speeding, and better property management.

The property owners for Sayonara Drive also held a workshop. This meeting was held to elicit the input of the property owners and their managers. The owners acknowledged their own issues including:

- Deteriorated neighborhood
- Need for additional street lighting
- Traffic Calming measures
- Need to bring property up to rental standards
- Need to bring full pressure code enforcement on those owners that do not cooperate
- Overcrowding and Housing Conditions

The City reacted quickly.

The first changes on Sayonara Drive were in the form of streetscape improvements. In 2003, the City received approximately \$1 million dollars in federal and local funding to install streetlights (36), rubberized asphalt paving, textured crosswalks, installation of stop signs, and other traffic calming measures (i.e. bulb-outs). The city also made limited landscape improvements (trees, shrubbery).



*The future of Sayonara Drive, artist rendition*

The City understood that some changes, especially to the modifications of existing buildings, would be expensive. The City recommended that improvements be made to the appearance of the buildings such as patios, porches, and trellises. By providing an attractive foreground, clearer territorial definition around the individual units would be accomplished.

Lastly, an area that could be used for recreation for children was also provided for in this plan.

In 2006, the City of Citrus Heights Police Department went live. One of the first concerns for Chief Chris Boyd was crime trends throughout the city, especially Sayonara Drive.

Patrol officers began aggressive proactive efforts. One building on Sayonara was the source for 3 separate shootings in one month. Police supervisors encouraged their

officers to proactively contact suspicious subjects in the area . It was essential that the criminal element, as well as the law abiding residents, were aware that criminal behavior would not be tolerated.

The new Special Investigations Unit (SIU) was created and immediately partnered with probation and parole offices of Sacramento County. SIU is responsible for street level crimes, narcotics investigations, gang activity, and crime suppression. Together, they conducted probation and parole sweeps of the known offenders on Sayonara.

Utilizing the county criminal database, SIU detectives conducted sweeps for warrants, executed search warrants, and conducted other high risk operations on various properties. The SIU detectives utilized undercover buy/bust operations, confidential informants, and surveillance of properties on the street. Numerous arrests were made.

The Police Department's new gang detectives (part of SIU) immediately began to gather intelligence on area gangs, identified gang members, validated new gang members, and determined which apartments were known hang outs.

Through investigations, it became clear that many of the active criminals and crimes on Sayonara Drive were not a result of residents, who lived there, but family and visitors from other cities throughout California.

The police department's efforts adapted to encouraging the departure of the problem people.

In 2008, Chief Boyd created the department's first Problem Oriented Policing Unit. Two officers were assigned and tasked with implementing community oriented policing strategies.

The POP officers efforts on Sayonara Drive were to continue what patrol and SIU began only two years earlier. The POP officers wanted to first identify who were residents of the street, and who were "just visiting".

The officers went to each building and identified the residents. They also contacted property owners/landlords to inquire about their knowledge of their tenants and activities. The POP officers educated the property owners on the abatement process, as well as remind them of their responsibilities regarding code issues that were present on their properties.

Even though the POP officers were educating the property owners of their responsibilities with code compliance, the City's code enforcement officers also

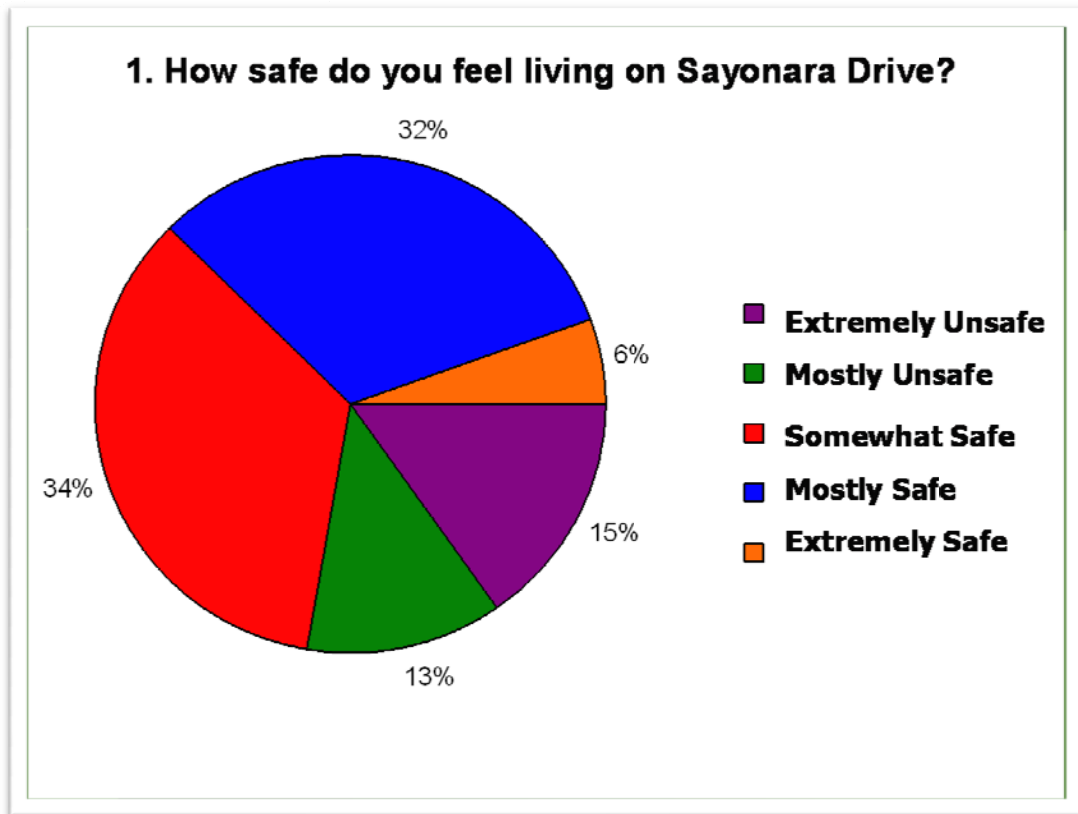


continued their enforcement efforts, citing property owners with any violations they encountered.

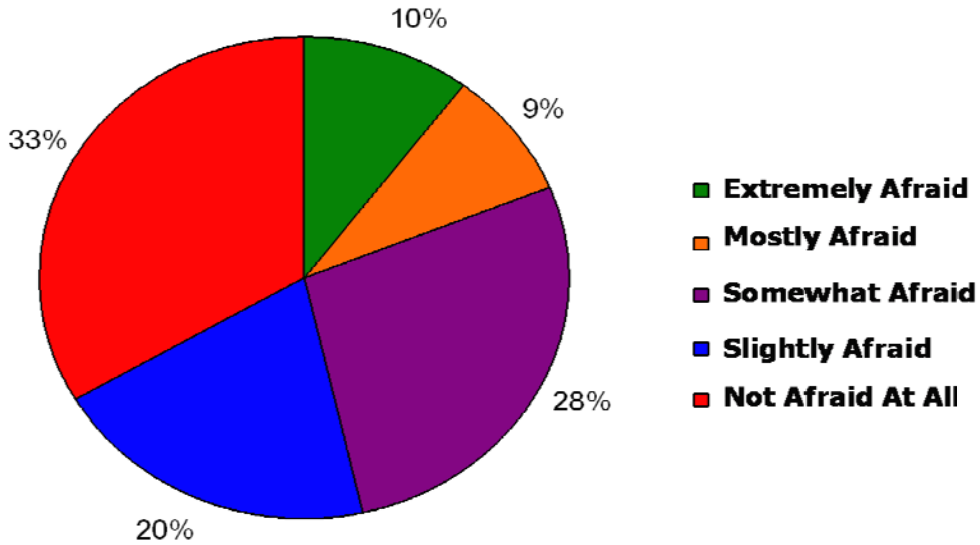
In order to gain involvement in community relations, the POP officers created a door-to-door survey for the residents to complete.

The goal of this survey was to solicit residents' opinions on what concerns they had with Sayonara Drive. The Police Department wanted to connect with the residents and improve the existing relationship. Questions covered topics that ranged from top safety concerns, to Police Department responses, to housing and living issues.

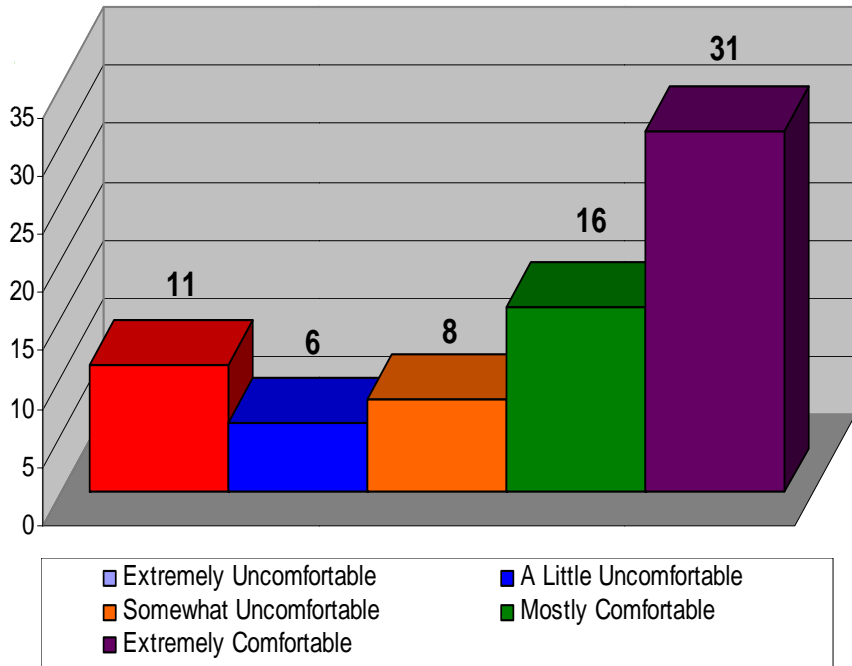
These questions were then analyzed and results were illustrated in graphs. Some of the questions and their analysis are as follows:



**2. How fearful are you of becoming a victim of crime?**



**3. Are you comfortable reporting a crime that happens on Sayonara Drive?**



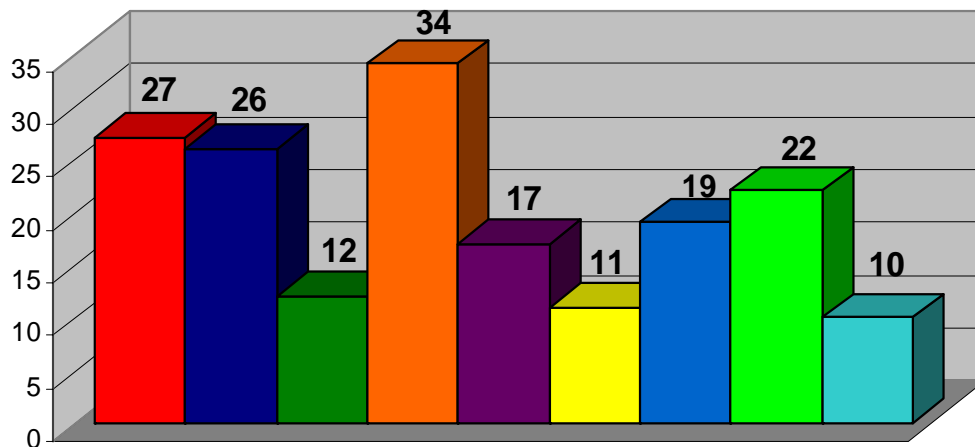
4. What do you feel the Police Department should do to improve their effectiveness in your neighborhood?

Top Five Responses:

- Extra Patrol
- Gang Suppression
- Faster Response Time
- Constant Surveillance
- Children Safety

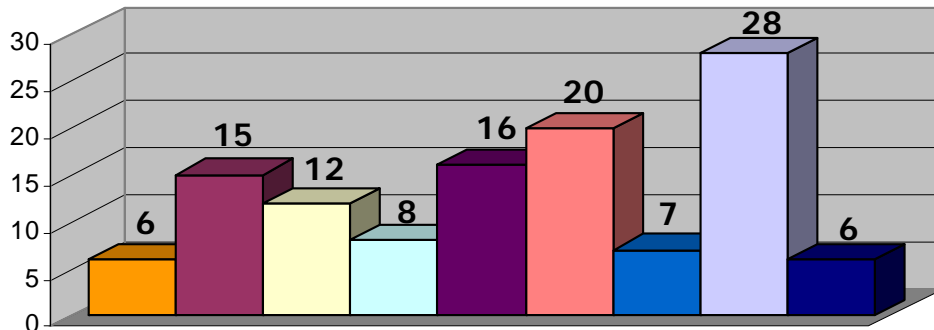


5. What is your primary concern regarding criminal activity in your neighborhood?



- |                  |                 |              |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ■ Drug Use       | ■ Drug Sales    | ■ Auto Theft |
| ■ Gang Activity  | ■ Vandalism     | ■ Graffiti   |
| ■ Violent Crimes | ■ Home Burglary | ■ Other      |

6. Other than the above, what do you think is the biggest problem in your neighborhood?

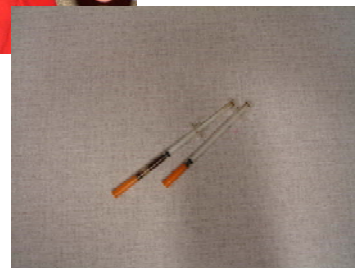


- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Abandoned Vehicles | Illegal Dumping   |
| Traffic            | Public Drinking   |
| Loud Parties       | Loitering         |
| Blight             | Rundown Buildings |
| Other              |                   |

7. What Problem would you like to see solved first in your neighborhood?

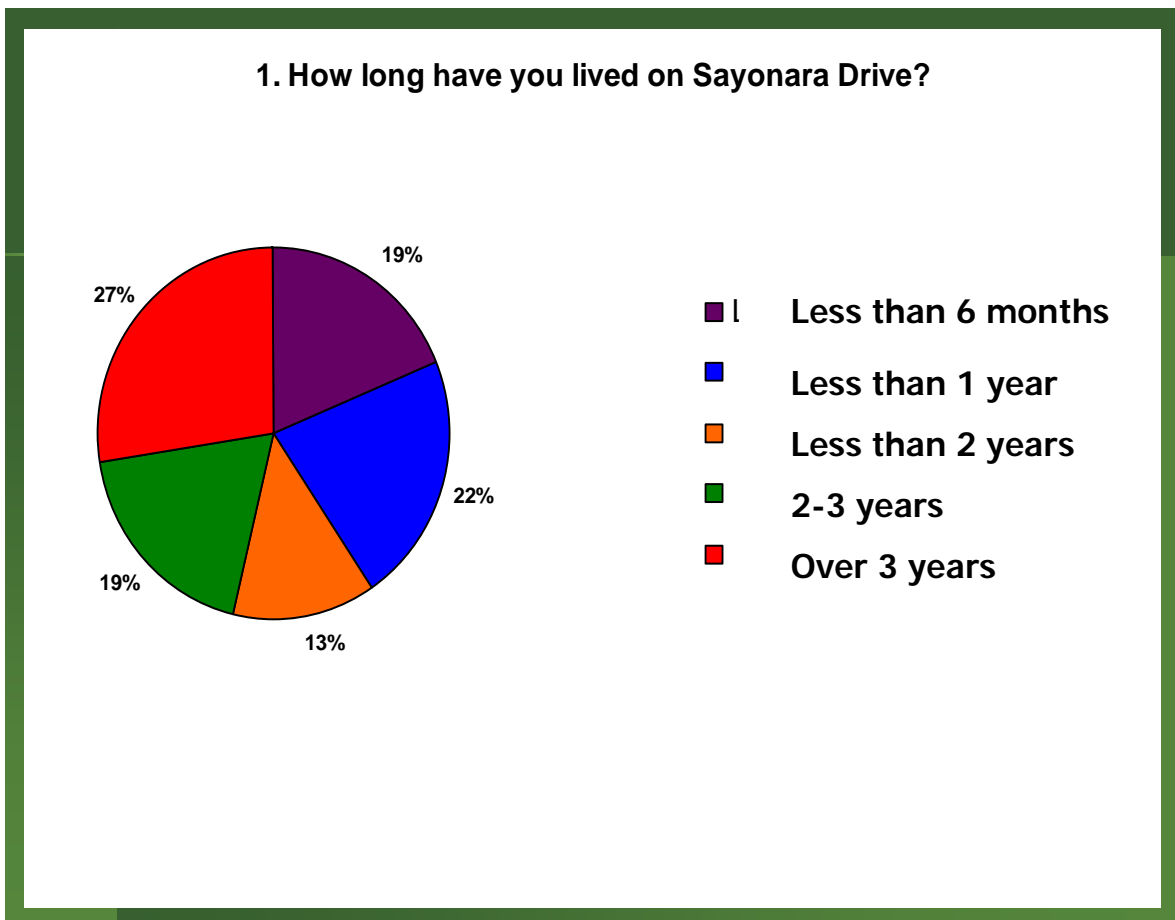
Top Five Responses:

- Gangs
- Drugs
- Child Safety
- Traffic
- Street Clean-up



The survey also sought input from residents regarding housing issues.

The survey asked questions regarding ownership of properties versus renting, structural issues, and landlord-tenant relationships. The intention was to gain an understanding as to the residents' perspective of living on the street, and how the Police Department could assist in improving these issues.



## 2. Renter or Owner?

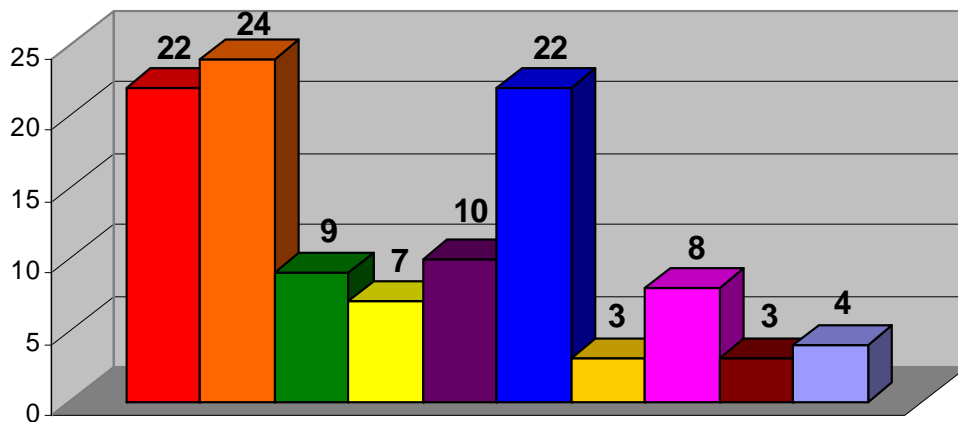
■ Out of 47 responses

■ 98% are renters

■ 2% owner-occupied



## 3. Do you have concerns regarding the interior of the building where you live?



■ Yes

■ Plumbing

■ Mold/Mildew

■ Leaking Roof

■ Lack of Room

■ No

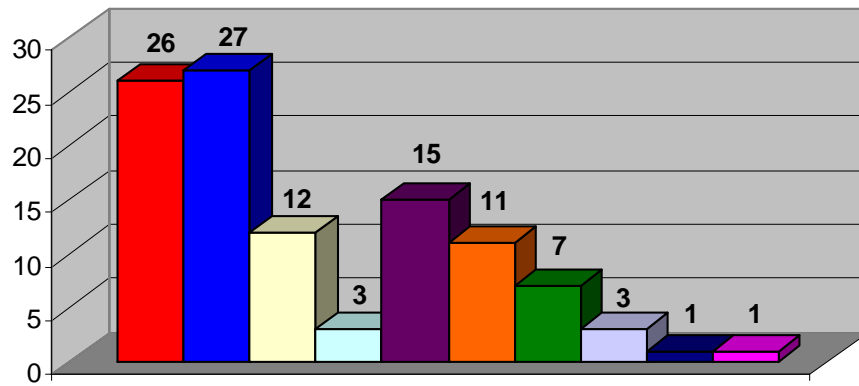
■ Electrical

■ Pest Infestation

■ Malfunctioning Appliances

■ Other

**4. Do you have concerns regarding the exterior of the building where you live?**

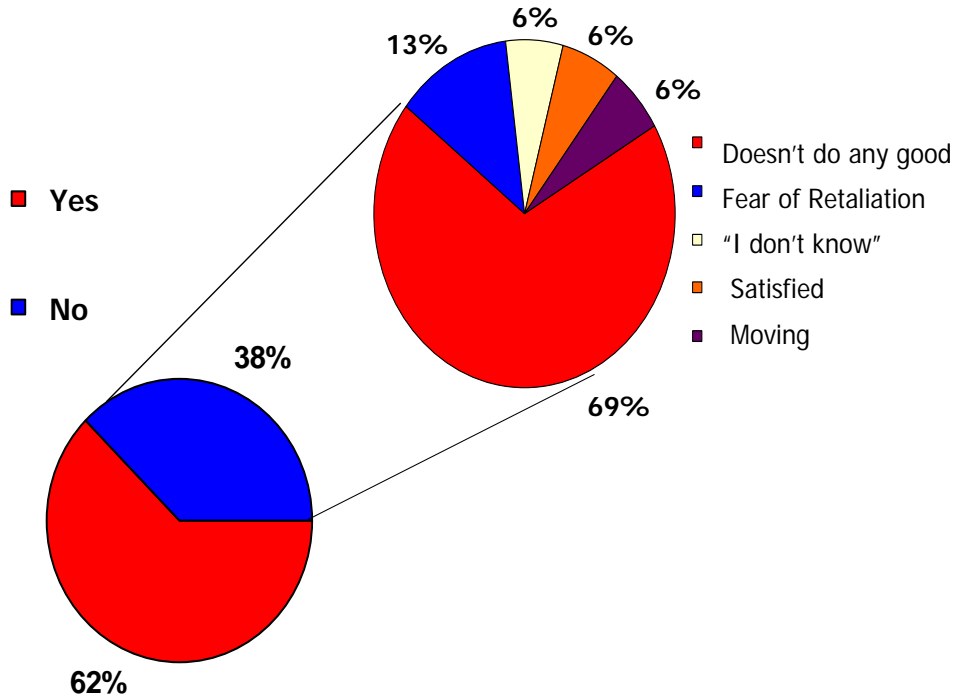


- |                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Yes                     | ■ No                   |
| ■ Neglected Landscaping   | ■ Unsafe Stairways     |
| ■ Lack of Play Area       | ■ Unkempt Appearance   |
| ■ Lack of Lighting        | ■ Garbage Pile-up      |
| ■ Bee and Ant Infestation | ■ Gutters Falling Down |

Additionally, the POP officers wanted to gauge the relationships with their respective landlords. The police department wanted to ensure that property owners and landlords were not simply “slumlords”, but were also playing an active role in ensuring that the area was thriving.

38% of those surveyed had not notified their landlord regarding the issues with the property. Of that 38%, 69% felt that “it didn’t seem to do any good” and 13% had a “fear of retaliation” (not elaborated).

5. Have you ever notified your landlord of these issues?



7. What do you feel the City could do to help improve the condition of housing on Sayonara Dr?

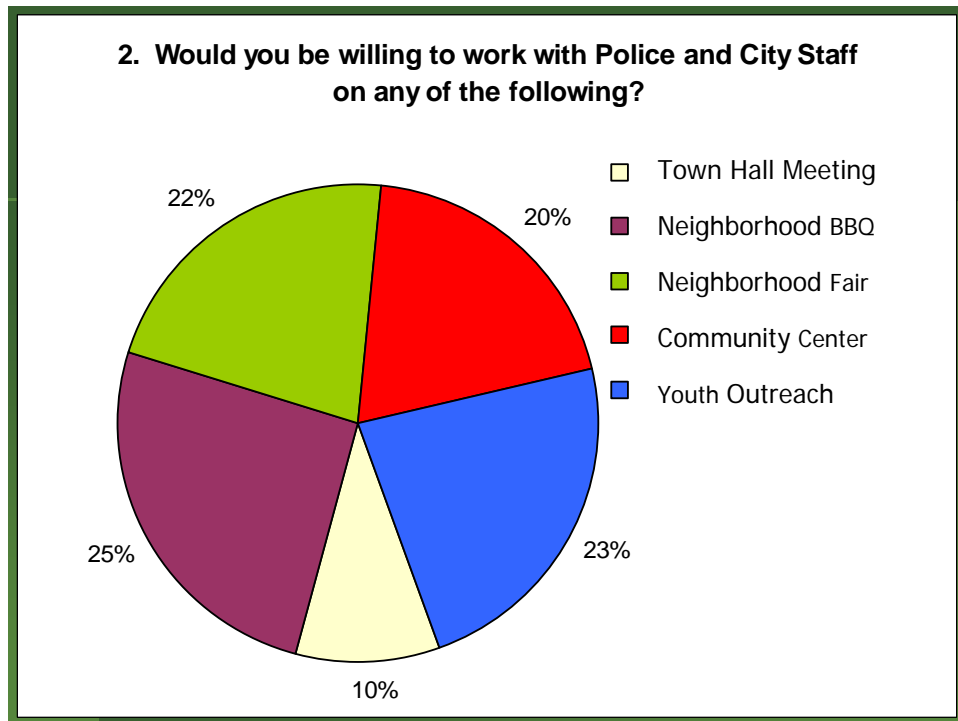
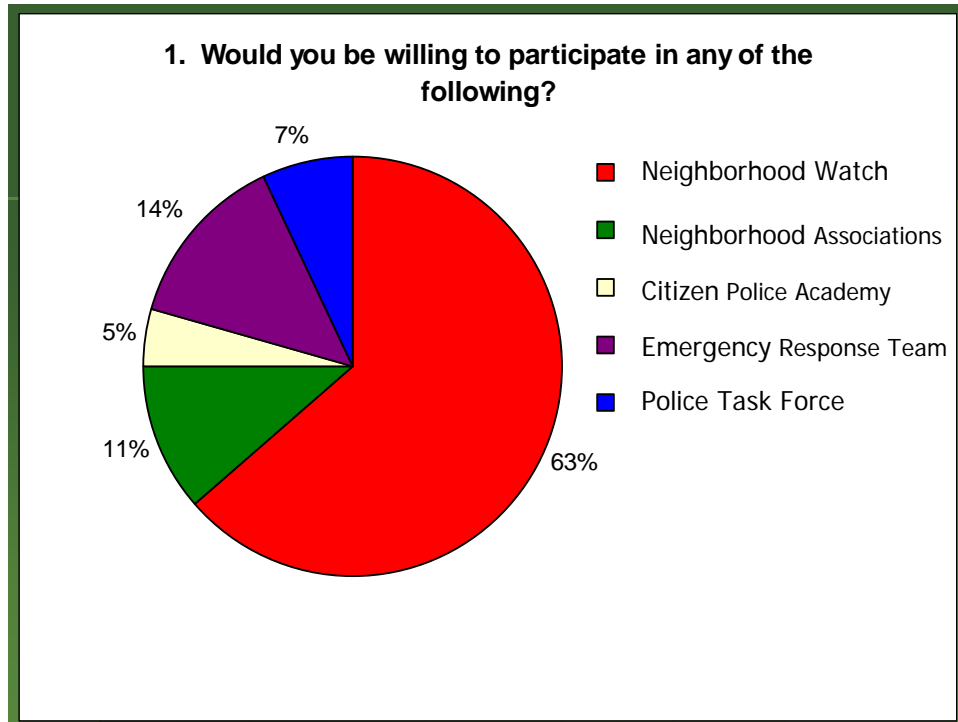
Top Five Responses:

- Playground
- Landlord Accountability
- Police Substation/Surveillance
- Housing Issues
- NEP notifications

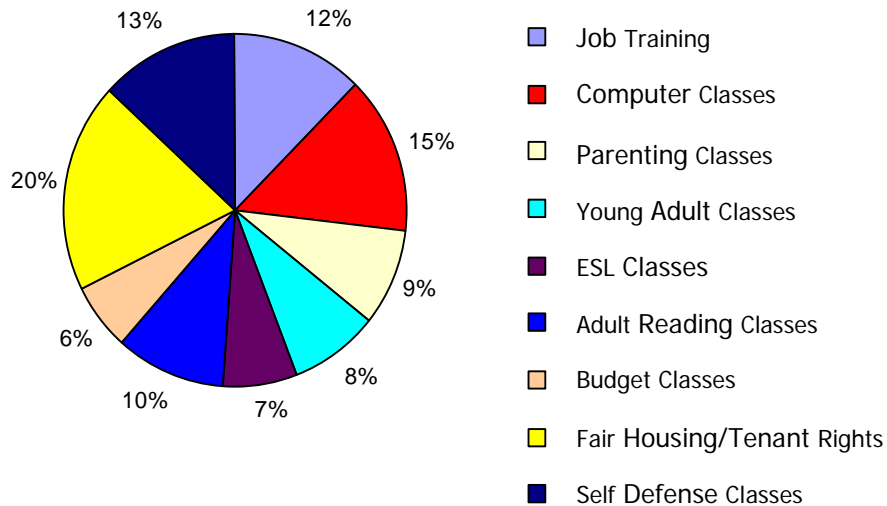




The survey also wanted to solicit opinions as to whether or not the residents had a desire to help the area improve. The survey asked *how and where* people wanted to be involved. The answers varied, from Neighborhood Watch programs to classes on Fair Housing/Tenant's rights.



**3. What type of services would you participate in if they were available at the Sayonara Community Center?**



**4. Are you willing to work with City Staff to help solve neighborhood problems?**

- 21 residents surveyed answered "YES"
- 45 residents surveyed provided their name and phone number



Armed with the results of the survey, the next goal for the POP unit and the Department was to identify some immediate solutions to the issues raised.

The POP officers encouraged the creation of a Neighborhood Watch. At the first Neighborhood Watch meeting, 15 people attended and one resident volunteered to be Block Captain.

With each meeting, attendance grew regularly (i.e. 23 at next meeting). Soon, word was getting out that the citizens *could* make a difference. Residents were consistently calling the POP officers, inquiring about crime prevention measures, crime tips, and requests for help with contacting social service agencies.

Local social clubs such as the “Active 20-30 Club” contacted community stakeholders and organized holiday events. The Police Department volunteered to participate in a “Shop with a Cop” event at a local K-Mart. Less fortunate children from Sayonara Drive were identified by social workers. Those children then received \$100 gift cards to shop for Christmas gifts for their families.



While residents were being empowered to take a stand against crime, the POP unit identified properties in which crime remained a constant issue. It was determined that the one 8-plex on the street was the source for virtually all the calls on Sayonara Drive.

Blatant drug dealing, fighting, gang activity, and felony assaults including shootings and stabbings continued, albeit less frequently, at this particular property.

The POP unit, along with code enforcement, police administrators, and city planners, met in a closed door meeting with property owner of the 8-plex. Utilizing tools such as crime stats and a list of code violations, the group emphasized to the property owner that he had a responsibility to address the concerns.

The property owner initially claimed no knowledge of the activities occurring at his property. But after a lengthy discussion, it became clear that he had been manipulated and *bullied* by the criminal element in allowing them to utilize his property for the criminal actions. In fact, he stated that he had been threatened on several occasions to “go away or else”.

The property owner agreed to allow the Police Department to act as an enforcing agent for trespassing and other nuisance issues. The City agreed to waive some fines so long as he would abate any problems including improving lighting, signage, and parking issues.

Officers, including the POP unit, again worked aggressively at stopping the crime at the 8-plex by arresting suspects who were caught engaging in criminal activity. These arrests were then provided to the property owner who, reluctantly, began evictions based on crime and drug addendums in his leases.

### CHANGING GEARS

While the police department and the code enforcement division continued its battle, the City of Citrus Heights began its focus on the next wave of redevelopment efforts.

In late 2008, the City Council acting as a redevelopment agency authorized the Executive Director to negotiate the purchase of properties on Sayonara Drive. \$1.78 million dollars in funds were appropriated to acquire and manage the properties.

Since that date, 15 properties have been purchased and a private management firm was hired to assist in the day-to-day management of the units. Citrus Heights, in keeping with its initial redevelopment plans for the area since it became a city, has a list of goals including:

- “de-intensifying” the area by reducing the number of units on the street
- Improving the quality of housing
- Promoting pride of ownership by encouraging home ownership opportunities
- Improving the function and esthetics of the land and buildings
- Reducing crime and calls for police and code enforcement services

While the City of Citrus Heights was moving forward with its redevelopment efforts, the property owner for the 8-plex quietly contacted the City Manager and offered to sell the City his property. This was looked at as an opportunity to gain control of a loose cannon. The City jumped on it and bought the property.

Evictions on that property were initiated, and the “visitors” left instantly. It was no secret that the City was not going to tolerate criminal or negative activity.

With direction from Chief Boyd, the Police Department including the POP unit piggy-backed the City’s revitalization actions and ramped up enforcement, with zero tolerance for crime.

In early April of 2010, the City’s Planning Manager attended the Sayonara Drive Neighborhood Watch meeting. During this meeting, she announced that the City of Citrus Heights applied for a federal grant for a park on Sayonara Drive. The city moved forward with this grant under a self-imposed contingency that the children of Sayonara Drive would assist in the design of the park. All indications are that Citrus Heights will be awarded the grant and receive funding.

One Saturday in May, the children of Sayonara Drive met for a few hours with the City Planning Manger at the community center. Designs were created and submitted with the sole purpose of the park being a part of *their* legacy.

The City’s plan is progressing fast. With the purchase of properties, the City is now beginning the demolition phase of the revitalization effort. The first place they started, the 8-plex.



The City Council is considering rehabilitating some properties, but is more inclined to turn the sites into affordable housing by working with groups like Habitat for Humanity. There is a strong focus for owner-occupied homes in the area.

Within the past 3 months, the Neighborhood Watch has grown with attendance. Residents approached the POP officers and told them that they were not only pleased to see them, but that they now felt safe to come outside. The POP officers even got a recent call from the Neighborhood Watch captain who invited them to a “neighborhood BBQ” *they had organized*.

Violent crime has virtually ceased on Sayonara Drive. Citizens’ calls for service to Sayonara Drive have increased, with complaints regarding (predominantly) nuisance behavior. In 2006, a total of 540 calls as compared to 859 in 2009. From January of 2010 till April 30 of 2010, there have been a total of 56 calls. Research shows that the citizens are trusting the Police, and know that if they call, they will respond.

Later this year, the City plans on a public and media event in which they will change the name of Sayonara Drive, with the hopes of shedding the stigma that surrounds the street and shift the identity of the neighborhood. The desire is to free the area from past negative associations and celebrate the positive changes that have occurred and those changes to come. It is also the culmination of a long, hard fought battle waged by so many people.

The collaborative efforts of city government, police, community members, and various interest groups have proven to be highly effective in improving the quality of life on Sayonara Drive. Saying Goodbye to Sayonara is an example of how a partnership with the community can result in great things.