



PROGRESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS IN LITTLE SAIGON

SUMMARY

Scanning: The ABC Center at 8970 Bolsa Avenue in Westminster is located in the west gateway into Little Saigon in Orange County, considered home to the largest Vietnamese community in the United States. The shopping center attracts a large numbers of customers but at the same time creates concern for public safety due to the number of traffic incidents, municipal code violations, transient activity, and other miscellaneous crimes.

Analysis: This shopping center has always been a “problem” area to the police department which was just addressed via patrol checks. Calls for Service (CFS) revealed the police department was responding or checking shopping center every day. Visually, the appearance of the center suggested the property owners did not care to upkeep the cleanliness and maintenance for their customers. Transients congregated throughout the center and would often cause problems amongst themselves or with customers. Property owners were reluctant to communicate with police due to language and cultural barriers.

Response: The police department recognized it was necessary to transform this center into a safe environment for customers. To make this transformation, they would have to work closely with Westminster Code Enforcement, the property owners, on-site security, and the transients. Suggested environmental factors included adding more trash cans, limiting sidewalk vending, repainting and enforcing the red curbs.

Assessment: In a five month period since the POP project was initiated:

- 23% decrease in dispatched CFS
- Officer initiated activity increased 116%
- Street vendors have a defined area of the sidewalk, keeping pedestrians away from harm’s way
- Overall appearance and cleanliness has improved
- Relationship between officers and store owners has improved

DESCRIPTION

PROGRESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS IN LITTLE SAIGON

SCANNING

Little Saigon is famous for being an epicenter for the largest Vietnamese community outside of Vietnam. The area of Little Saigon is officially bordered by Westminster Boulevard, Bolsa Avenue, Magnolia Street, and Euclid Street which spans over the cities of Westminster and Garden Grove in Orange County, California (Appendix A). In 1975, thousands of Vietnamese refugees settled in Westminster after the end of the Vietnam War. The refugees began to rebuild their lives by opening restaurants and other shops in this area. Little Saigon was officially dedicated on June 17, 1988 by California Governor George Deukmejian¹. To this day, thousands of local residents frequent this area to shop, as well as tourists.

One of the major shopping centers in Little Saigon is located at the south west corner of Bolsa Avenue and Magnolia in the city of Westminster. This shopping center will be referred to as the “ABC Center” as the ABC Supermarket at 8970 Bolsa is the anchoring store of the 12 located on the premises. The 12 stores consist of the ABC Supermarket, a major bank, small shops which sell food and electronics, and on the sidewalks of the center, legal and illegal street vendors. The ABC Center has a large parking lot with many entry and exit points that lead to the intersection of Bolsa Avenue and Magnolia Avenue. To the rear of the center there is also a sizable area of parking and storage.

With a large amount of customers frequenting this area, several issues started to develop in the center. Transients began to congregate in the area and beg customers and property owners for money. In the Vietnamese culture, this was culturally tolerated and accepted. However, the transients began sleeping

¹ <http://westminsterchamber.org/tourist/index.php>.

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or camping to the rear of the center at night, urinating and defecating, and digging through the dumpsters. The store and property owners were unresponsive to deal with the transients and the overall appearance of the shopping center declined. The legal and illegal street vendors who set up shop on the sidewalks during the day pushed customers to walk along the sidewalk. Customer safety was endangered because they would be walking alongside the busy traffic in the parking lot. At the end of the week, the entire center was strewn with trash from transients, street vendors, and customers.

ANALYSIS

The ABC Center has historically been a problem area in the city of Westminster. Between 2000 and 2010, there was an average of 397 CFS at the location a year (Appendix B). This meant that officers were at the location once every day of the year. Of the 397 CFS, 60% were dispatched calls for service and 40% were officer initiated.

Patrol checks/crime. Between 2000 and 2010 there was an average of 25 patrol checks a year at the ABC Center. Of most concern, was the number of robberies occurring at the location. On average during this ten year time frame there was an average of four robberies a year. The majority of the robberies involved “purse snatches” from elderly female customers.

Language/cultural barrier. A major factor in the low number or rather reluctance of patrol checks, may have been the language barrier between officers, property owners, and customers. The primary language spoken at the ABC Center is Vietnamese, while the primary language of officers is English. Currently, there are only four Vietnamese speaking officers on the patrol roster out of 50. During this time, officers were assigned to geographic areas and not all four of the officers may have been assigned to this side of the city. The cultural barrier also existed between the Vietnamese culture’s perceptions of law enforcement. Generally, Vietnamese view law enforcement as untrustworthy due to bad encounters experienced in Vietnam with law enforcement. Due to this perception of law enforcement,

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property owners or customers that may have been contacted by officers in the ABC Center, may have been reluctant to communicate with the officers.

Property owner responsibility/Upkeep of property. The ABC Center is comprised of 12 businesses with 12 different owners. Historically, the Westminster Police Department and Westminster Code Enforcement (WCE) have made efforts to have the owners work together to maintain the property. According to WCE, the owners cannot decide on who is responsible for what issues. These failed attempts led to poor appearance of the entire shopping center. Appearance wise, the buildings were falling apart, the trash cans were overflowing, and the parking lot was strewn with garbage. To the rear of the center the dumpsters were overflowing with trash and it became a dumping ground for mattresses, furniture and other items.

Transients. Transients have been a long standing issue at the ABC Center. Transients loiter and camp out in the rear of the property, often creating unsanitary conditions by defecating in public. Transients also solicit the customers and have been known to become aggressive to the customers. Transients often solicit the property owners for money or food and create disturbances or vandalize the store if their needs are not met. Property owners would often give in and give the transients food so they would leave them alone. Transients also added to the problem of the dumpsters because they dug through the trash and left trash in the parking lot.

Illegal Vendors. Illegal vendors sell fruits, newspapers, and vegetables on the sidewalks directly outside the storefronts which blocks the sidewalk from pedestrian traffic. Pedestrians were forced to walk off the sidewalk into the parking lot where they may be endangered by vehicles driving by. Illegal vendors take away business from the actual store owners who have permits to sell merchandise. The vendors also left behind their trash at the end of the day and were not held responsible for their actions.

Traffic. Due to the high amounts of visitors to Little Saigon and the ABC Center there is a traffic problem. 42% of the average CFS in this area between 2000 and 2010 were traffic related incidents.

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Within the parking lot there are no directional arrows, customers make their own parking spaces, and illegally park along the red curb line. There are many entry and exit points to the center which cause high congestion and collisions.

RESPONSE

In December 2010, the Westminster Police Department shifted the department's policing strategy from the traditional policing model of responding/reacting to crime to Area Command which involved problem oriented policing. The entire department would be more proactive and accountable for areas within the city. The city was redistricted from three beats (A, B, C) to two areas (East and West). Each area is led by one Lieutenant and supported by one non-sworn Area Public Safety Officer (PSO), and patrol.

Under Area Command, officers were responsible their own problem oriented policing projects (POPs) using the S.A.R.A model as their guide. POPs were created and justified by the primary officer through an initial report. The primary officer was supported in the POP by other officers. Any work such as FIs, patrol checks, arrests, and contacts were documented by the officers in a supplemental. The primary officer's report and officers' supplementals were tracked under an issued case number using the Records Management System (RMS). POPs were closed by the primary officer once the officer felt the issues were addressed.

The ABC Center is located on the East side of Westminster under the command of Lieutenant Timothy Vu. The center was nearly immediately identified as a POP project on December 13, 2010 by Corporal Cameron Knauerhaze. From the start, Corporal Knauerhaze knew in order to make a change in this center would require a collaborative community effort between the police department, WCE , property owners, and persons who frequented the area. Corporal Knauerhaze began this project by writing a summary of all the issues listed above. This was documented as the main report issued under

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Westminster Police Department POP-East Case Number 10-11092 (Appendix H). Any follow up done by other officers in the area were documented under the same report but listed in a supplemental.

Meeting with the 12 store owners

Corporal Knauerhaze knew he would encounter language and cultural barriers if he tried to contact these store owners on his own. The PSO assigned to the East Area Command was PSO Jenny Truong, who spoke fluent Vietnamese. Corporal Knauerhaze and PSO Truong set out to speak with the store owners one-on-one informing them of the police department's new policing philosophy and goals for the center. Together they explained the potential increase in police presence and increasing public safety.

Westminster PD and Westminster Code Enforcement

In January 2011, Officer Dave Ferronato worked with WCE Officers Rene Ramirez and Andy Gulcher to identify the issues and how they could be addressed. Such issues included the overall appearance of the center, the trash in the parking lot and rear of the location.

Westminster PD Personnel

WPD patrol officers were at first hesitant to move forward with the POP due to the unfamiliarity of this process. They were used to patrol checks of just driving by the location and looking for any major crimes. They would have to change their mindset. Patrol was instructed by Lt. Vu on patrol checks to get out of the vehicle and make contact with the property owners or security in order to build the rapport, which was initially lacking. Historically with transients, they would be ignored but Patrol would have to cite them or tell them to move along for loitering at the location.

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ASSESSMENT

Quantitative Data

The initial start of the POP project was December 13, 2011. For comparison purposes the “before” period which was used was five months prior to the start date (7/13/2010-12/13/2010) and “after” was five months after the start date (12/14/10-5/13/2011). When looking at total CFS for these two time periods there was an increase of 43% in total CFS after the project was initiated (Appendix C, Appendix C-1). Of these CFS, there was a 20% increase in citations which were issued. The largest increase in citations was citations for illegally parked vehicles (1 before, 18 after).

The increase in total CFS was due to the significant amount of officer initiated CFS (116% increase), particularly Patrol Checks and Foot Patrols (Appendix D-1). Dispatched CFS decreased between the before and after periods by 23% (Appendix D). The most significant decreases included calls for transients, hit and runs, stolen vehicles, and vandalisms (Appendix E).

Qualitative Data

Appearance. After a collaborative effort between WPD, WCE, and property owners there has been an immediate improvement to the ABC Center. Cosmetically, the ABC Market has been painted and the roof is currently being repaired (Appendix I). The other 11 property owners have been served with repair notices by WCE for paint and exterior appearance issues. The long-term goal is to have all the businesses the same paint color as the ABC Supermarket by the end of calendar year 2011.

Pedestrian safety. The curb has been repainted red to deter illegal parking in the fire lane. A red line has been painted in the middle of the sidewalk, one side for vendors with permits and the other side is for pedestrians. With this effort, the red line will keep pedestrians off the street out of harm’s way (Appendix F). There are currently plans to re-stripe the parking lot with directional arrows to help with

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the flow of traffic in and out of the parking lot. With the help of the on-site security guard at this center, he has also helped with the traffic flow and pedestrian safety.

Cleanliness. Concerns with trash and cleanliness of the ABC Center have also seen positive results. The property owners brought in more trash cans to the center. Street sweeping of the parking lot was only done once a week, but has since increased to once every morning (everyday) (Appendix H). Previous unpermitted street vendors who left behind their trash have been advised to not leave their trash behind. To ensure the dumpsters located in the rear of the center do not overflow, WCE teamed with Midway City Sanitary District to create the “Over-The-Top Program”. Under this program, dumpsters are to remain at “level full”, if they go over the businesses can be fined.

Transients. Patrol officers and property owners have noticed the transient activity has decreased and many have since migrated off the property. There still remains a few transients but have remained harmless. Since there is street sweeping of the parking lot and enforcement on keeping the dumpsters from overflowing, this has curbed dumpster diving by the transients. There is general concern that these transients have been displaced to other areas of Little Saigon.

Relationships. There is no doubt that the relationship between WPD and property owners have greatly improved. This achievement could not have been formed with cultural and language barriers which previously existed. These barriers were broken by Corporal Knauerhaze and PSO Truong (Vietnamese speaking). Once Corporal Knauerhaze and the PSO Truong explained why they were there and the goals, the property owners were receptive to the increased police presence. Other officers who were on patrol checks got out of their units and spoke with property owners to find out what the issues were. The following quotes are some comments gathered by Corporal Knauerhaze:

“It is nice to see officers around here more, they would just drive through in the past, now we see them walking around and talking to people.” Cindy, owner/operator of Trai Cay Ngon Fruit store.

“Things have really changed for the good around here, WPD is really cleaning this place up. I enjoy working with Officer Ferronato, he has met with me on several issues.” Art, security guard.

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Corporal Knauerhaze has also authored his first Community Policing Update (Appendix G) which summarized why the project was started the center along with the short term successes of WPD. This was hand-delivered to the property owners.

Recommendations

There are some suggestions which could have helped when comparing the effectiveness of this project. Besides looking at the historical CFS, the property owners and customers could have been given a survey before the start of the project and after. For this particular project the survey could have been given in December 2010 and then during May 2011. The survey would have inquired about the look and smell of the property, personal safety, traffic and other issues using a scale (Example: “1” as disagree to “5” strongly agree).

WPD has made significant progress at the ABC Center during this short time with using problem-oriented policing and the S.A.R.A model. However to keep maintain these results WPD and Westminster Code Enforcement will have to make a continued effort to monitor transient activity, parking violations, and illegal vendors.

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Key Project Team Members

Lt. Timothy Vu, East Area Commander

Corporal Cameron Knauerhaze

Officer David Ferronato

PSO Jenny Truong

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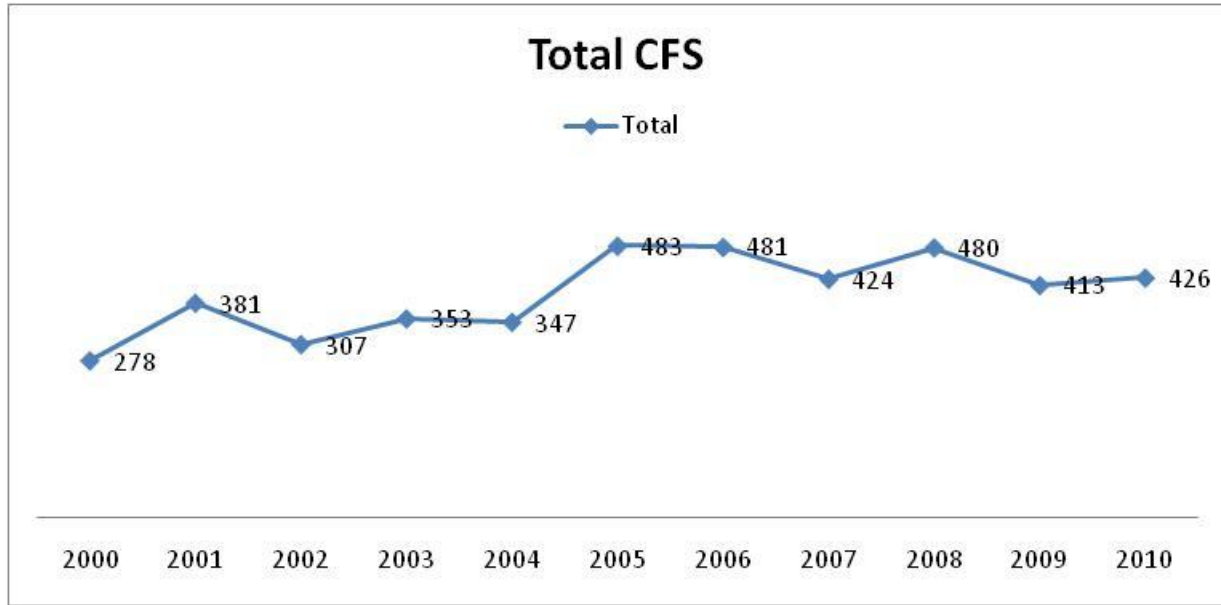
Email: Eyee@westminster-ca.gov

APPENDIX A

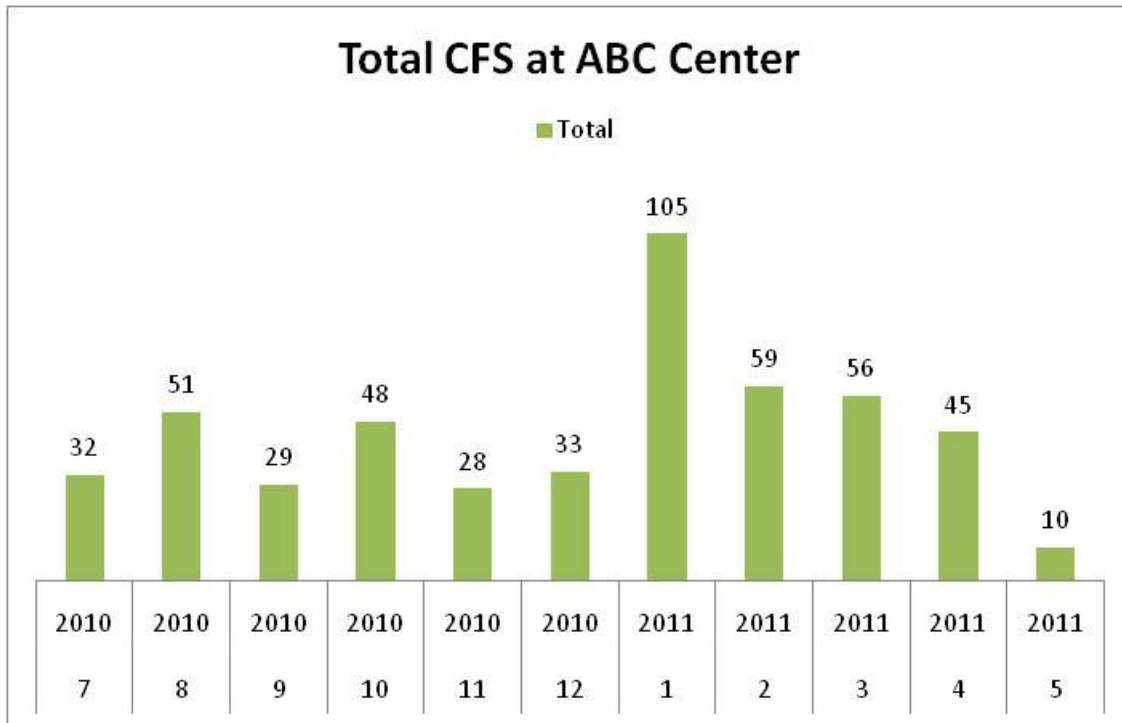


<http://www.sunset.com/food-wine/flavors-of-the-west/guide-little-saigon-00400000011445/>

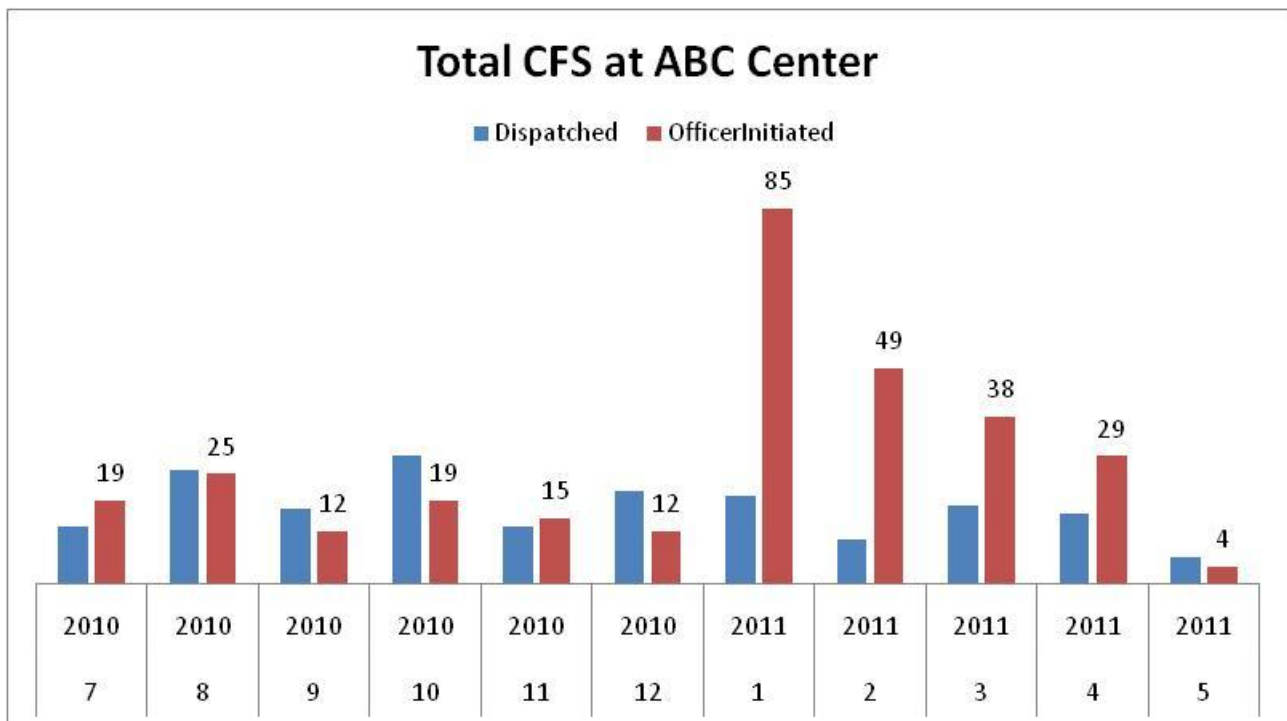
APPENDIX B: Historical Data at ABC Center



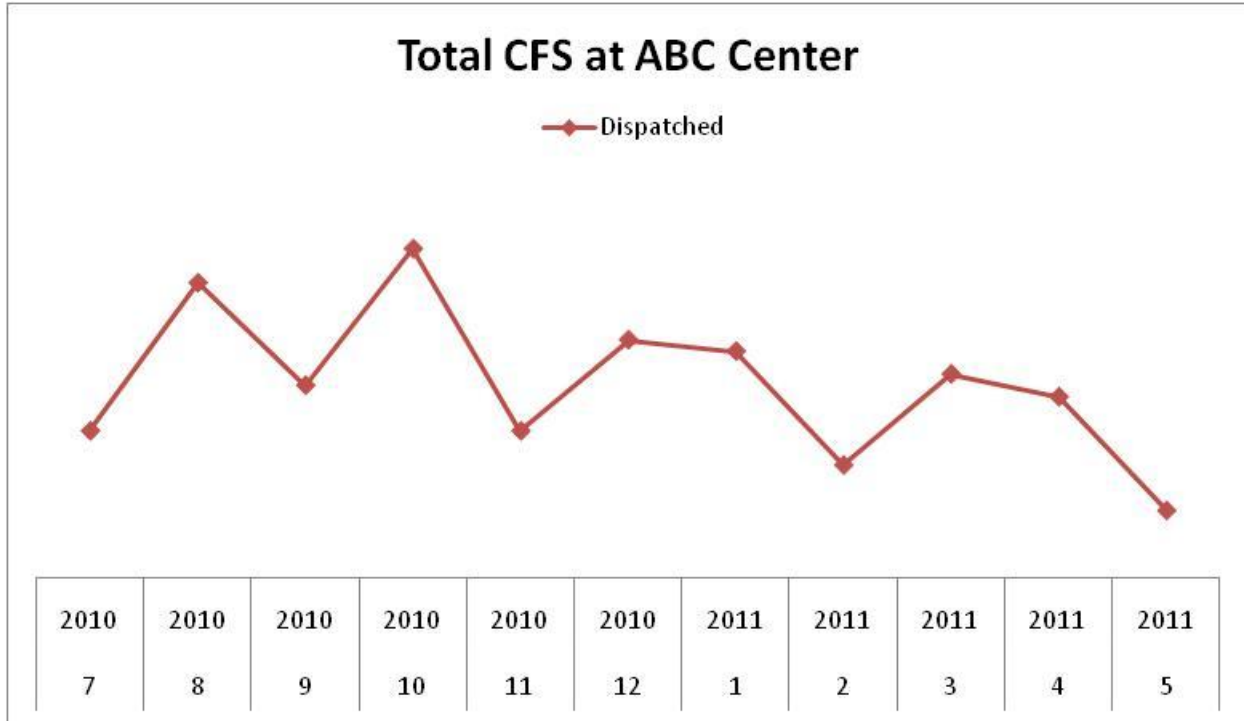
APPENDIX C



APPENDIX C-1



APPENDIX D



APPENDIX D-1: Officer Initiated CFS

CFS	Before	After	Grand Total
Traffic Stop	62	42	104
Patrol Check	1	76	77
Foot Patrol	1	37	38
Illegally Parked Vehicle	1	20	21
WMC Violation	7	13	20
Pedestrian Stop	9	4	13
Subject Stop	2	7	9
Suspicious Circumstances	4	2	6
Impound Vehicle	1	2	3
Report Writing		2	2
Bicycle Stop	1		1
Vehicle Vandalism Report	1		1
Vandalism Report	1		1
Assist Other Agency		1	1
Investigation	1		1
Burglary/Vehicle	1		1
Transient	1		1
Warrant		1	1
VehAccident	1		1
Found Property	1		1
Open Door	1		1
Disturbance		1	1
Hit/Run		1	1
Stray Animal		1	1
Grand Total	97	210	307

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APPENDIX E: Dispatched CFS

CFS	Before	After
Disturbance	7	7
Audible Burglar Alarm	9	5
Transient	10	1
Hit/Run	7	4
Private Party Impound	3	6
WMC Violation	7	2
Lost Property	6	3
Medical Aid	4	4
Petty Theft Report		7
Stolen Vehicle Report	5	
Battery	2	3
Burglary/Vehicle	2	3
Citizen Assist	3	2
911 Hangup	3	2
Forgery	2	2
Suspicious Circumstances	2	2
Vandalism Report	4	
Burglary Report	1	3
Petty Theft/ In Custody	1	3
Assist Other Agency	3	
Grand Theft Report		3
Subject Stop	1	2
Petty Theft	1	2
Illegally Parked Vehicle	3	
VehAccident	2	1
Robbery	2	
Mental Illness Related	1	1
Found Property	1	1
Patrol Check		2
Misc Information		2
Peddling/ Soliciting	2	
Missing Adult	1	1
Warrant	2	
Resisting or obstructing		2
Foot Patrol		1
Vandalism	1	
Code Echo	1	
Panic Alarm		1
Stake Out	1	
ADW Report		1
Detail	1	
Silent Robbery Alarm	1	
Identity Theft Report		1
Specify Call		1
Repo Vehicle	1	
Spousal Abuse	1	
Public Intoxication	1	
Reckless Driver		1
Area Command Master Case	1	
Narcotic Activity	1	
Grand Total	107	82

APPENDIX F

Before



After



APPENDIX G

EAST AREA COMMAND

COMMUNITY POLICING UPDATE

APRIL, 2011 BY: CAMERON KNAUERHAZE, CORPORAL

ABC Supermarket Project



The purpose of this newsletter is to bring you up to date on the community policing efforts that have taken place on the East side of Westminster. The hard work and dedication of the men and women of WPD has been instrumental in the implementation of our new area command philosophy.

ABC Supermarket shopping center is located at the southwest corner of Bolsa Ave. and Magnolia St. This shopping center is host to a multitude of businesses like, Bank of America, Grand Garden

Restaurant and many more. This complex is the gateway to the Little Saigon Corridor and sees thousands of customers throughout the week. Over time, the area in and around the complex has deteriorated. In December of 2010, a Problem Oriented Policing Project was initiated. WPD identified numerous problems such as:

- Vagrants
- Unlawful vending
- Cleanliness
- Graffiti
- Traffic Congestion

A Work in Progress...

We are now four months into this project and the results have been great. Business owners and citizens have openly expressed their gratitude in our efforts. There has been a **20% decrease** in overall calls for service (e.g., transients, illegal vendors, etc.). Officer initiated activity has **increased 350%**. The property management has repainted all fire lanes and curbs at our request in an effort to alleviate congestion. All city codes are being fully enforced with

full support of the tenants.

ABC Supermarket has repainted their entire building. All graffiti has been removed from the property. Business owners are complying with the red vending line on the sidewalk. This keeps an open right-of-way for shoppers to walk.

Business owners and their employees routinely meet and talk with officers about any issues that arise. One shop owner told me, "I love it, the

cops have really cleaned this place up, it's so nice to see them walking around the property." This successful partnership has sparked similar projects at other nearby properties.

~

If we have learned anything, we have learned the power of collaboration. Citizens and shop owners have been empowered to take ownership of their community and make it a better place.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- From January 1, 2010 to December 23, 2010, there were 466 calls for service at the center.
- Cart vending is not only illegal, but it takes away revenue from the legitimate businesses and creates potential health concerns.



FRESH PAINT AND A CLEAR PATH.



Things do not change, we change- H.D. Thoreau

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APPENDIX H

A

CASE REPORTS

Case #

10-11092

Entered By: CameronK

Supp-1-Knaue/152 (A)
 Supp-1-Booth/189 (A)
 Supp-2-Booth/189 (A)
 Supp-1-Chow/136 (A)
 Supp-1-Covau/171 (A)

Curr. User: ELIZABETHY

For Officer: ELIZABETHY

View All

MO

Narrative

Management

Records

Event Date(s) and Time(s)

Report Creation Date 12/13/10

Event Desk Data:

Reported Occurred to

Date Rec'd

Crimes and Locations

Crime	Description	Location
POP-EAST	POP East	8970 Bolsa Av; ABC Supermarket

Number

Location 1

Intersection 2

Summary

ABC Supermarket, and the southwest corner of Bolsa and Magnolia in general has become an area of urban decay. The area has become an attractive nuisance and host to: traffic problems, municipal code

Report Type: Agrest Criminal Non-Criminal

Case Status

APPENDIX H

Before



After



APPENDIX I

Before



After

