

Dear Mr. Guerette:

Please accept the enclosed nomination for the Arlington Police Department's "Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative" project for the 2016 Herman Goldstein Award. This comprehensive, innovative initiative effectively addresses theft and shoplifting issues permeating one of Arlington's largest commercial stakeholders, Walmart Corporation. The goals of the "Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative" were to create sustainable stakeholder partnerships, eliminate specific criminal activities long term, and reduce the overall manpower hours generated during calls for service.

Arlington officers and detectives held several meetings regarding an increase in theft and shoplifting offenses and manpower hours expended at one Walmart location, in an effort to determine the most effective way to reduce these offenses. After deploying numerous prevention methods, it was determined that none were effective in sustaining a reduction in offenses or in manpower hours over time. Assistant Chief Kevin Kolbye initiated contact with Walmart Corporation executives and invited them to Arlington to brainstorm a more collaborative effort that would not only meet Arlington's goals, but create a decrease in overall shrinkage for Walmart. A meeting was conducted with Walmart Corporate representatives, local Walmart asset protection managers, Arlington PD Deputy Chiefs, Lieutenants, Sergeants and Detectives, which led to the creation of the Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative. This comprehensive problem-solving initiative was combined with the services of the Corrective Education Company (CEC) to provide an opportunity for verified minimal-risk offenders to be diverted into a program focused on rehabilitation and improving long-term behavior. Arlington Police Department has experienced an astonishing 41.6% decrease in Walmart shoplifting and theft offenses in 6 months and saved 2,128 manpower hours, which resulted in a total savings of \$54,300.00.

Because community policing is our cornerstone philosophy, Arlington officers pride themselves on their abilities to identify and solve problems. All Arlington officers and supervisors have been trained in problem-oriented policing and problem-solving techniques, either as part of their basic training or during continuing education and training efforts. While additional incentives were not provided for working on this specific project, our performance appraisal system evaluates an officer's ability to utilize problem solving.

The Arlington Police Department strengthened existing community relationships and forged new partnerships to address theft and shoplifting issues. The City of Arlington's Police Department and its stakeholders will continue to benefit greatly from the ongoing success of the "Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative."

Persons interested in additional information on this project may contact:

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We are honored to submit this deserving nomination for such a prestigious award. Please feel free to contact Assistant Chief Kolbye or Sergeant Jones with any questions.



WALMART RESTORATIVE JUSTICE INITIATIVE ARLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT- ARLINGTON, TEXAS

SUMMARY

Although crime rates in Arlington, Texas have decreased annually from 2010 through 2014, some UCR categories began to increase in 2015. Theft was a primary driver of this upward trend, particularly the categories of “all other theft” and “shoplifting.” Location analysis revealed that the three Arlington Walmart locations were responsible for a significant portion of the total increase experienced. Enforcement strategies already in place were focused on offender detection and crime prevention, which were not successful in slowing the rate of increase. In order to be more effective, the Arlington Police Department actively engaged the corporate office of Walmart to initiate and jointly implement a multifaceted plan of action.

Theft and shoplifting offenses at the three Arlington Walmart locations comprised about 45% of calls for service 60% of all arrests for all offenses encountered. Conventional methods of increasing officer visibility within the Walmart storefront and in the parking lot were not effective. In order to affect the crime trend, a change would have to occur not only in the police department’s approach, but also within all three Walmart stores. Arlington partnered with Walmart Asset Protection Managers and Corporate representatives, and with the leadership of the Correctional Education Company (CEC) to establish the Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative, a task force with a mission to address this theft and shoplifting issue. The task force developed the “8 Step Approach” made up of eight target-hardening factors designed to significantly reduce theft and shoplifting offenses at each of the locations. A first time offender program was included in the “8 Step Approach,” which encouraged qualifying offenders to participate in a diversion program rather than being immediately arrested.

The Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative launched a pilot project on October 1, 2015 exclusively at all three Arlington Walmart locations, with assessments conducted after 3 months and again after 6 months. The initiative resulted in a decreased of 41.6% in calls pertaining to theft and shoplifting offenses. Theft and shoplifting calls resulting in arrests decreased by 61.0%. Overall these reductions translated to a decrease of 2,128 manpower hours expended by the Arlington Police Department at these three locations. In addition, 183 offenders successfully completed the “First Time Offender Program.”

DESCRIPTION

A. Scanning

Crime rates in Arlington, Texas decreased annually from 2010 through 2014. In 2015, crime rates in some categories began to increase to the point that it appeared that Arlington would be on track for a crime rate increase. Theft was a primary driver of this upward trend. Analysis revealed that the “all other theft” and “shoplifting” categories represented a significant portion of the total theft offenses committed. Repeat location analysis of theft and shoplifting offenses revealed that the three Arlington Walmart locations were responsible for a significant portion of the total (see Figure 1).

From January through September 2015, the Arlington Police Department had responded to 5,849 theft and shoplifting calls for service citywide. Of those calls for service, 16% (924) occurred at the three Arlington Walmart locations. The high volume of calls for service at area Walmart stores had been historically addressed through generic crime prevention responses without conducting comprehensive analysis of the crime problem. These generic responses were ineffective, causing theft offenses to either continue to increase or to temporarily decrease and then return to higher levels.

Arlington’s manpower intensive prevention and enforcement activities at three specific locations resulted in an excessive use of resources and increased costs. Historically, Arlington’s efforts to reduce calls and resource utilization were targeted at the local store level rather than at the corporate level.

Research revealed that local law enforcement agencies in the region and throughout the United States share similar concerns over the lack of partnership with Walmart in addressing the alarming increase in offenses and calls for service at their stores.¹ In Tampa, Florida, “law enforcement logged nearly 16,800 calls in one year to Walmart stores in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties.... That’s two calls an hour, every hour, every day.”²

B. Analysis

The Arlington Police Department actively embraces problem-oriented policing as a philosophy. Officers and leaders used these principles to better understand the crime problem at the Walmart locations and to prepare an effective response to the problem. Arlington focused on the patterns and trends of prolific offenders and created a higher visibility within the storefront and in the parking lot. Walmart Asset Protection Managers and store managers were introduced to the use of force multipliers, and conducted training for their personnel completing police department forms to aid in evidence transmittals for subjects involved in theft offenses. The force multipliers deployed at Walmart included:

- Foot patrols (interior and exterior efforts)
- Bike patrols (within the parking lot)
- Citizens On Patrol (COP) Mobile, which are vehicles marked with Arlington Police Department logos for volunteer use
- Decoy vehicles, which are marked Arlington Police Department patrol vehicles parked strategically within the Walmart parking lot
- Ancillary efforts, such as researching repeat offenders and conducting weekly checks with Asset Management
- Dynamic message boards containing messages specifically targeting offenders

¹ Institute for Local Self-Reliance, “Wal-Mart’s Impact on Local Police Costs”, electronic source accessed on the World Wide Web on May 15, 2016 at <http://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/bbtk-factsheet-policecosts.pdf>

² Zachary T. Sampson, Laura C. Morel, and Eli Murray, Tampa Times, May 11, 2016: “Walmart – Thousands of Police Calls. You Paid the Bill” accessed on the World Wide Web on May 15, 2016 at <http://www.tampabay.com/projects/2016/public-safety/walmart-police/>

- Traffic enforcement details conducted in the vicinity of the store to promote deterrence of criminal deviance within the area
- Directed patrols at the store location, used to create high officer visibility
- The Prevention Information Table or “P.I.T. Stop,” containing tourism tidbits about safety, crime prevention and the consequences of criminal behavior
- Sky Watch Towers, strategically deployed within the parking lot to monitor exterior pedestrian and vehicle traffic

Arlington officers looked for innovative ways to increase officer presence by using force multipliers in the most beneficial areas. These innovations were deployed in response to different strategies employed by Walmart personnel to reduce the retailer’s theft and shoplifting losses. Inventory losses, referred to as shrinkage, are a significant concern for retailers and may have multiple causes such as “shoplifting, employee theft, paperwork errors, and supplier fraud³.” For example, Walmart Asset Protection protocol included calling 9-1-1 prior to an actual theft offense occurring. Officers were then required officers to sit idle in the store parking lot waiting for confirmation that an offense occurred, followed by contact with the subject. Many times contact with subjects led to arrests and even Use of Force reports. Arlington Police Officer Michael Wilson worked with the local Walmart store in the city’s south patrol district to conduct foot patrols inside the store in order to maintain a police presence. Changing strategies, innovations and increased visibility still did not reduce the number of calls for service or the number of reported offenses at the three Walmart locations.

In order to gain a better understanding of the problem, hotspot maps of the citywide theft offenses were developed. The maps clearly showed theft and shoplifting offenses to be concentrated at the three Walmart locations (see Figure 2). An additional hotspot was created over Arlington’s retail district, The Parks Mall and The Highlands, which is spread over multiple city blocks and houses multiple dozens of

³ The Associated Press, June 13, 2007, “Wal-Mart losing \$3 billion a year from thefts”, accessed May 15, 2016 on the World Wide Web at <http://archive.azcentral.com/business/consumer/articles/0613biz-walmarttheft13-ON.html>

retailers. This district is a heavy mixed-use development corridor along a major interstate highway. It is also in immediate proximity to several hotels and to the southern portion of Arlington's entertainment and tourism venues. An analysis of offenses at the retail district did not produce a trend or a concentration of offenses at any specific retailer. Only the Walmart location to the south of the retail district produced a significant offense concentration.

In addition to the shopping district, Arlington is also home to a large entertainment district which contains two major sports stadiums within walking distance of each other. One is the AT&T Stadium, home to Dallas Cowboys football, and the other is Globe Life Park at Arlington, home to Texas Rangers Baseball. The stadiums are in close proximity to motel and hotel properties, amusement parks, water parks, and other tourist attractions, and frequently experience an influx of 80,000 people or more. One of the Walmart stores is located directly across the street from the AT&T Stadium.

Crime Analysis evaluated calls for service and arrests at the three Walmart locations from January 2012 through December 2014 in order to determine how much of the total enforcement activity at these locations were the result of theft and shoplifting offenses. When theft and shoplifting calls were compared to all calls for service (excluding traffic stops, traffic accidents, and DWI offenses), the impact was clear. Theft and shoplifting offenses averaged about 45% of all calls for service for all the three locations combined (see Figure 3). Calls for service for both theft and shoplifting calls and for all calls for service showed an upward trend over this three year period (see Figures 4 and 5).

For the same time period, calls resulting in arrest at the three locations were evaluated. Comparing theft and shoplifting arrests to all arrests (excluding arrests due to traffic stops, traffic accidents, and DWI offenses), the impact was even greater. Theft and shoplifting arrests averaged 60% of all arrests for all three locations combined (see Figure 6). Arrests for both theft and shoplifting and for all other offenses also showed an upward trend over this three year period (see Figures 7 and 8).

In order to investigate and close theft or shoplifting cases, Arlington patrol officers typically spend 1 to 2 hours of total time per case from initial investigation to final disposition, with the average call requiring a 2 officer response. In addition, Arlington detectives spend an additional 2 hours

conducting follow-up activities such as jail workouts and evidentiary findings related to the case. The manpower hours dedicated to theft and shoplifting cases at these three locations is substantial, taking officers and detectives away from other assignments and thereby increasing the financial burden to Arlington Police Department.

Arlington's Assistant Police Chief Kevin Kolbye, along with a team of command staff, officers, detectives and crime analysts, examined the crime trends and the effectiveness of past prevention and enforcement efforts. Chief Kolbye realized that in order to affect the crime trend, a change would have to occur not only in the police department's approach, but also within the apprehension philosophy at all three Walmart stores.

C. Results

The initiation of a targeted pilot program required the collaboration of both Arlington and Walmart in order to develop a successful, replicable, and sustainable program that would reduce theft and shoplifting offenses. Chief Kolbye contacted the Vice President of Walmart and initiated the Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative by meeting with over 50 individuals, including the following participants:

- Assistant Chief Kevin Kolbye
- A Deputy Chief, Lieutenant, Sergeant and a Detective from the three patrol districts containing a Walmart store
- An asset protection manager from each of the three Walmart stores
- Two Vice Presidents from Walmart Asset Protection
- Dr. Read Hayes, Subject Matter Expert and Research Scientist at the University of Florida, Loss Prevention Research Council
- A Crime Analyst from each represented district

The first Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative meeting was held in August 2015. The focus of the meeting was to develop examples of how Walmart and Arlington could partner together to develop a

program that stressed prevention over apprehension. The program would only be feasible if it combined the concept of prevention with unified responses to theft and shoplifting offenses that were implemented in the same way at every Arlington Walmart location. The Arlington team and Walmart Asset Protection representatives expressed concerns and discussed setbacks regarding sustaining an effective method of enforcement. From this meeting, the “8 Step Approach” was developed.

The “8 Step Approach” represents a commitment from Walmart to the Arlington Police Department and its residents that Walmart was invested in the city and wanted to aid in the overall reduction of theft and shoplifting offenses. Walmart understood the importance of reducing the strains placed on the department caused by employing so many ineffective force multipliers at the three store locations, while neglecting other deserving stakeholders within the community. The “8 Step Approach” is as follows:

1. **The “More at the Door” Philosophy:** Walmart reinstated greeters at every main entry/exit point in each of the three Arlington stores. The greeters, wearing yellow asset protection vests and equipped with radios, would check the receipts of store patrons to ensure the items bagged matched the items on receipt. This procedure was adopted from the current practices used at Walmart Corporation’s Sam’s Club stores.
2. **The “Signs do Matter”:** Research articulated by Dr. Hayes emphasized the need to use joint APD/Walmart signage to let the public know that shoplifters will be prosecuted for the commission of offenses conducted on Walmart’s property.
3. **Enhanced Public Monitoring (EPMs):** Walmart would install 6” TV mirroring screens at face level in identified aisles and at the self-checkout registers, as well as install a 60” jumbo mirroring screen over the store entry points that face toward the check-out aisles. Both systems are designed to record customer activities.

4. **Magnetic Sensors with overhead TV screens at the store exits**: When magnetic sensors are triggered and activated, the red notification of “RECORDING IN PROGRESS” will begin.
5. **The utilization of Criminal Trespass Warnings (CT Warnings)**: Arlington officers will issue Criminal Trespass Warnings to repeat theft and shoplifting offenders who have criminal histories.
6. **“First Time Offenders Program”**: This program coordinated between the Tarrant County District Attorney’s Office, City of Arlington Legal Department and the Correctional Education Company (CEC). The program is designed to allow eligible participants to resolve their criminal conduct in a civil capacity, rather than in a criminal capacity, therefore fostering a restorative justice environment.
7. **APD Marked Unit Deployment**: Arlington Police Department would deploy marked patrol units in the store parking lots on a rotating basis, to act as an unattended decoy.
8. **APD Officer Visibility**: Arlington Police Department would increase visibility by deploying officers on foot patrols, bike patrols, and occasionally within the interior and the exterior of the stores, including the parking lots.

The unified objectives of the program were established to achieve the following results:

- **Objective 1**: Reduce the number of reported calls for service by adopting the “8 Step Approach”
- **Objective 2**: Successfully register all qualified offenders as participants in the CEC Restorative “First Time Offender Program”

- **Objective 3**: Reduce the number of police department manpower hours expended on calls for service and arrests by identifying those offenders who would be potential beneficiaries of the CEC restorative justice program
- **Objective 4**: Reduce the number of calls for service and arrests
- **Objective 5**: Capture the cost benefit analysis of money saved

The most unique aspect of “8 Step Approach” is the “First Time Offender Program,” which gives Walmart the capability to encourage qualifying offenders to participate in this diversion program rather than being immediately arrested. This program is administered by the Corrective Education Company (CEC). The offender is required to successfully complete the required online courses and pays a \$500 fee for civil restitution. In exchange, criminal charges will not be brought and the offender will not be criminally trespassed from the Walmart location. In order to qualify for the program, the offender would be required to have a driver’s license, which would be used to conduct a background check similar to that done through the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). An offender not found within the system would be able register as a participant.

D. Assessment

The pilot launched on October 1, 2015, and assessments were conducted after 3 months and again after 6 months. The number of offenses and arrests were measured, as well as the number of people who were successfully enrolled in the diversion program. Each Arlington Police Department patrol district conducted officer training regarding the implementation and significance of the “8 Step Approach,” including the importance of collaborating with Walmart Asset Protection managers to ensure that all non-violent and cooperative offenders are offered the program. The results of the Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative are as follows:

Objective 1: Reduce the number of reported calls for service by adopting the “8 Step Approach” (see Figure 9).

✓ **Results Achieved:**

When calls for service during the initiative were compared to calls for service during the same period in the previous year, the following results occurred:

- Theft and shoplifting calls decreased by 41.6% (-279)
- Calls for offenses other than theft and shoplifting increased by 2.7% (+16)
- Theft and shoplifting arrests decreased by 61.0% (-244)
- Arrests for offenses other than theft and shoplifting decreased by 31.6% (-25)

Objective 2: Successfully enter all qualified offenders as participants in the “First Time Offender Program” (see Figure 10).

✓ **Results Achieved:**

- 28% (188) offenders qualified for the CEC Restorative Justice Initiative
- 97% (183) offenders accepted and completed the “First Time Offender Program”
- 28% reduction in calls to the Arlington Police Department

Objective 3: Reduce the number of manpower hours expended on calls for service where offenders could be potential beneficiaries of the CEC restorative justice program (see Figure 9).

✓ **Results Achieved:**

A theft or shoplifting call for service is allocated 4 total hours of time, including all officers and investigators responding to the call, investigating the offense, interviewing

witnesses, and creating police reports. An arrest is allocated an additional 4 total hours of time, including all officers transporting the offender to jail, booking the offender into jail, and booking in the evidence associated with the offense. The manpower hours saved as a result of the initiative are:

- 1,052 (-263 calls) manpower hours saved due to reduced calls for service
- 1,076 (-269 arrests) manpower hours saved due to reduced calls resulting in arrests

Objective 4: Reduce the overall number of offenses at each location (see Figure 11)

✓ **Results Achieved:**

- Total offenses at the US Highway 287 (West) location increased by 6.8% (+20)
- Total offenses at the S. Cooper Street (South) location decreased by 36.1% (-122)
- Total offenses at the Randol Mill (North) location decreased by 25.7% (-161)
- Total offenses for all locations combined decreased by 20.9% (-263)

Objective 5: Capture the cost benefit analysis of money saved.

✓ **Results Achieved:**

- \$25,248 saved due to reduced calls for service (manpower hours multiplied by \$24 per hour)
- \$29,052 saved due to reduced calls resulting in arrest (manpower hours multiplied by \$24 per hour)
- Total savings in manpower hours is \$54,300

The results of this initiative have far exceeded expectations, and the benefits have extended beyond the influence of the Arlington Police Department. After reviewing the results of the six-month analysis, the Walmart Corporation was so impressed and pleased with their decision to partner with Arlington that they have implemented this initiative at several other Walmart locations in Texas and Florida. The success of the initiative has established a blueprint for other law enforcement agencies to use as they partner with Walmart to address the shared concerns of excessive manpower hours and resources spent on calls for service. This initiative is a successful example of how law enforcement can be one piece of a solution, but that a community response is required to take ownership of the problem.

One key element in the success of the program was Vice President of Asset Protection and Safety for Walmart Store US Mike Lamb's willingness to change the culture of Walmart's asset protection program. The Arlington Police Department would not have been able to decrease the amount of resources deployed at the three Arlington store locations without Mr. Lamb's full cooperation. Another key element in the success of the program is the collaborative efforts of all team members working on the initiative. Officers have worked diligently throughout the six month pilot to communicate effectively with the Corrective Education Company (CEC) to address any concerns or suggestions as the program progressed.

Chief Kolbye highlighted the initiative by stating:

“Walmart deployed the CEC restorative justice program in Arlington, Texas in October 2015. Since deployment, the Arlington Police Department has seen a 41% reduction in theft and shoplifting calls for service and now has thousands of man hours to put back into the community. This allows our department to focus on more pressing issues as well as to spend time in collaborative efforts with our community members.”

– Assistant Chief Kevin Kolbye

When reviewing the workload for detectives in relation to the “8 Step Approach”, one Arlington detective stated the following:

“From a detective’s point of view, the “8 Step Approach” does seem to reduce the amount of jail workouts and report review/case management time. The cases submitted to the CEC program reduce the time spent with that aspect of work. I personally have only had a small amount of cases returned for investigation due to the participant failing out of the program.”- Jennifer

Walmart Asset Protection Manager Erin Martinez had this to say about the initiative:

“Arlington Police Department began discussing early last year how we were actively trying to prevent theft in the store. Due to the “8 Step Process”, what may sometimes start out as a tense situation for us, quickly shifted to a calmer, more relaxed incident. The amount of offenders we enrolled significantly reduced the amount of calls we were making to the Arlington Police Department thus reducing the amount of time they were taken away from patrolling and other calls. Overall, the program has been a great success. – Erin

CEC Director Jeff Powers and assistant Helen Landwehr provided the Arlington Police Department with weekly and monthly feedback regarding the number of offenders disqualified from participating in the program versus accepted program participants. One participant had this to say about the initiative:

“I just completed this course and it has helped me remember who I am and who I want to be. I would like to give back to retailers and help others who feel unable to control their impulse to shoplift. I am not a felon, and even though my actions and life style have not shown it lately, I have values and integrity and would love to give back and help make a difference.”

-Jack

The positive feedback from this program prompted Walmart officials to add another unique restorative justice component to the program. Walmart has instituted a plan to offer jobs

to successful program participants in an effort to continue the restorative justice principles begun through the Walmart Restorative Justice Initiative. Arlington's goals for future sustainability of this program are to continue utilize the program within the Arlington Walmart stores, and to implement the same type of program for other problematic locations within the city. In the near future, Arlington expects to see increased benefits to our community as a direct result of the restorative justice component of the program.

Agency and Officer Information

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APPENDIX

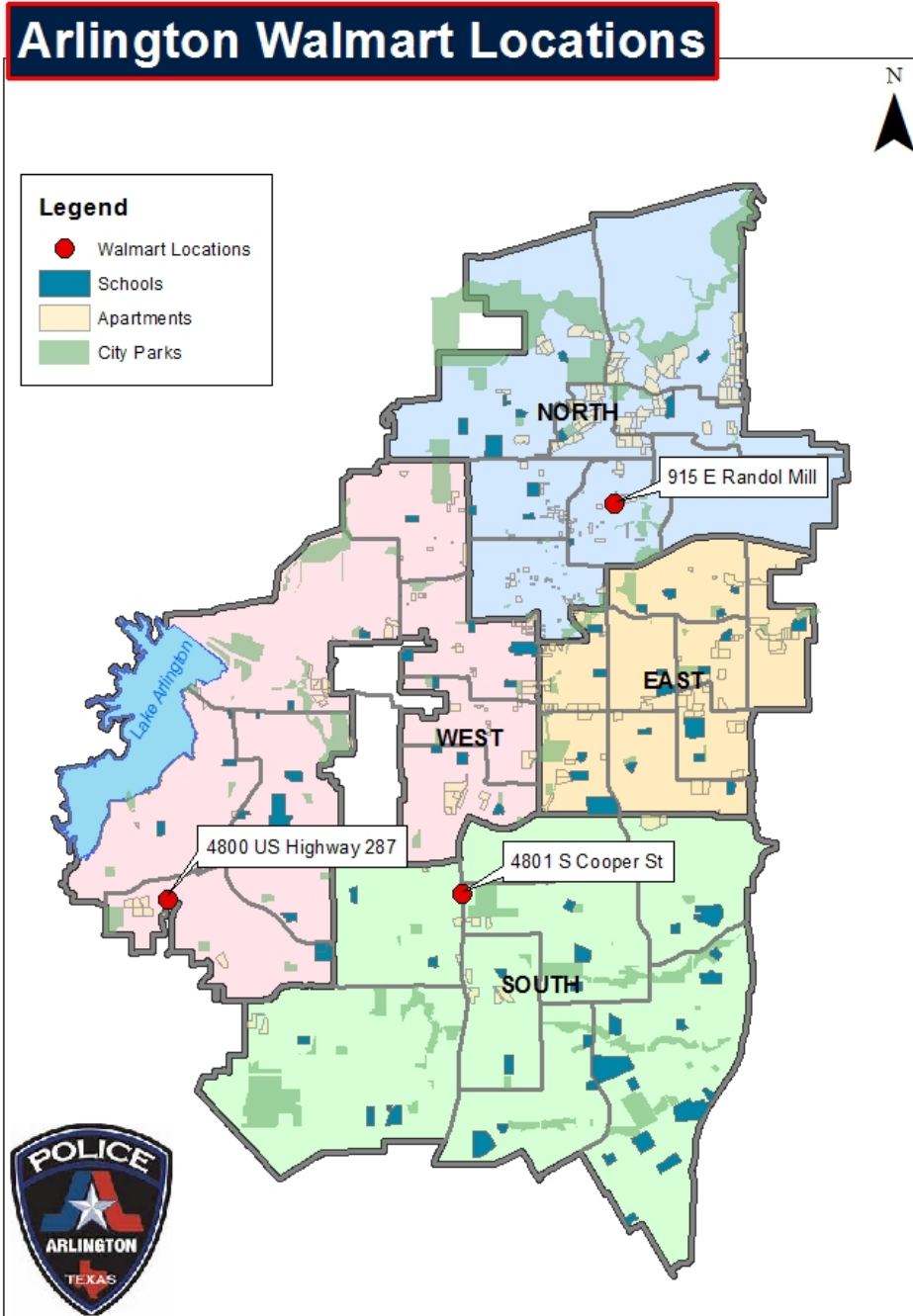


Figure 1 - Walmart Locations in Arlington, Texas

Theft and Shoplifting Hotspot Map 1-1-2014 to 9-30-2015

Legend

- Walmart Locations
- Schools
- Apartments
- City Parks

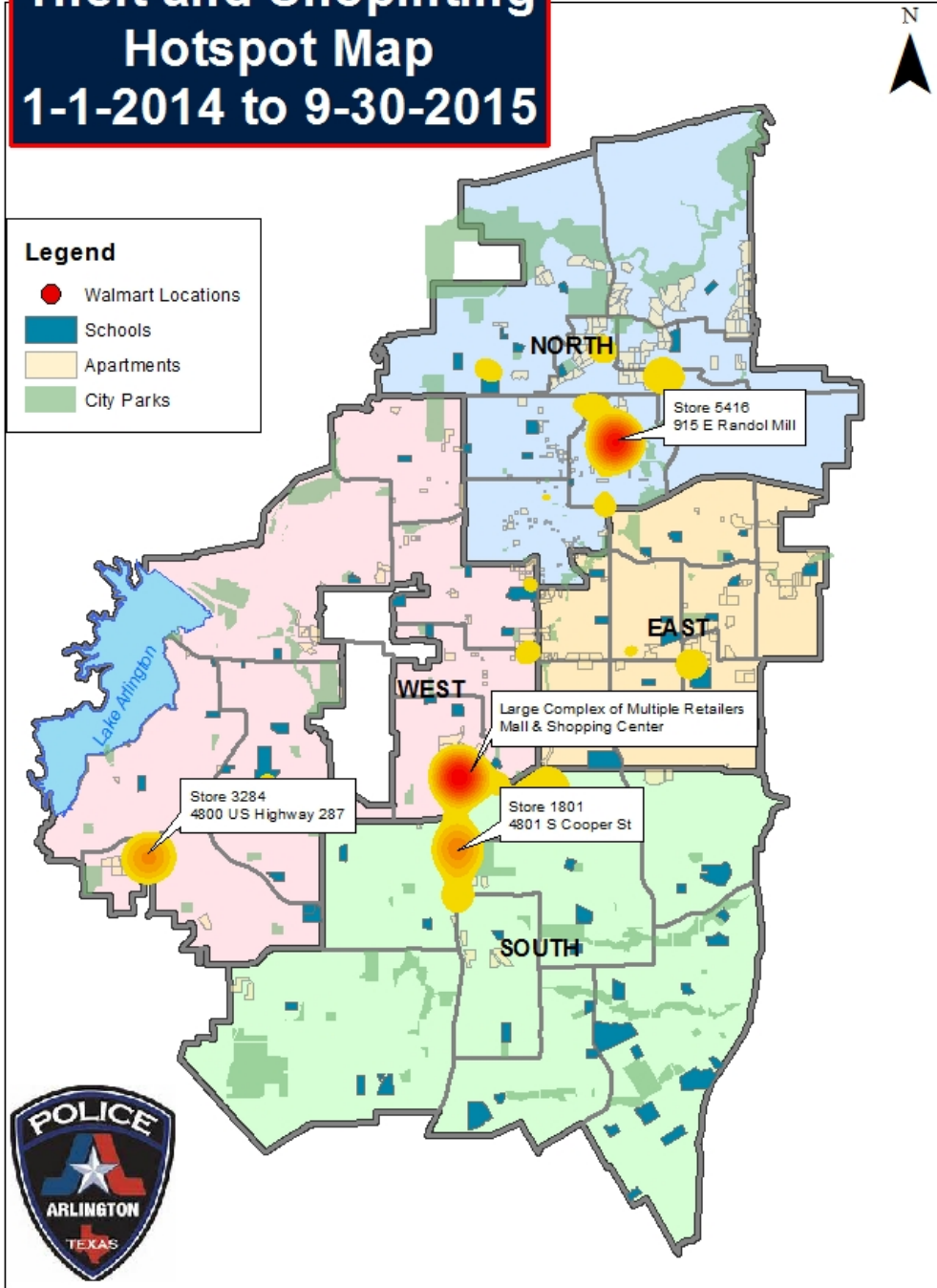


Figure 2 - Theft and Shoplifting Hotspot Map

Theft/Shoplifting as a Percentage of Total Calls for Service					
All Locations	2012	2013	2014	Total	Average
All Offenses	2335	2023	2,132	4,358	2163
Theft/Shoplifting	955	824	1,080	1,779	953
% Theft	40.9%	40.7%	50.7%		44.1%

Note: The All Offenses category excludes traffic stops, accidents and DWI

Figure 3 – Theft Calls as a Percentage of All Calls at Walmart



Figure 4 - Theft/Shoplifting Calls for Service 2012-2014

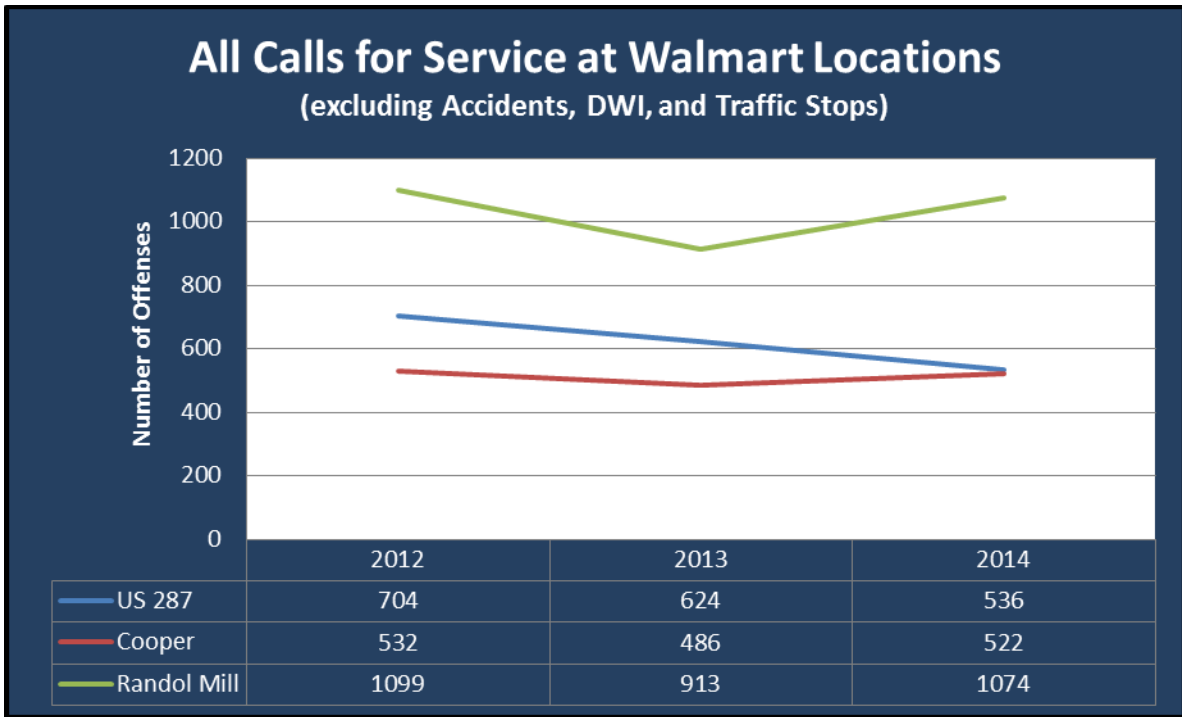


Figure 5 - Calls for Service for all Offenses 2012-2014

Theft/Shoplifting as a Percentage of Total Calls Resulting in Arrest					
All Locations	2012	2013	2014	Total	Average
All Offenses	855	731	968	1,586	851
Theft/Shoplifting	506	417	603	923	509
% Theft	59.2%	57.0%	62.3%		59.7%

Note: The All Offenses category excludes traffic stops, accidents and DWI

Figure 6 - Theft Arrests as a Percentage of all Arrests at Walmart

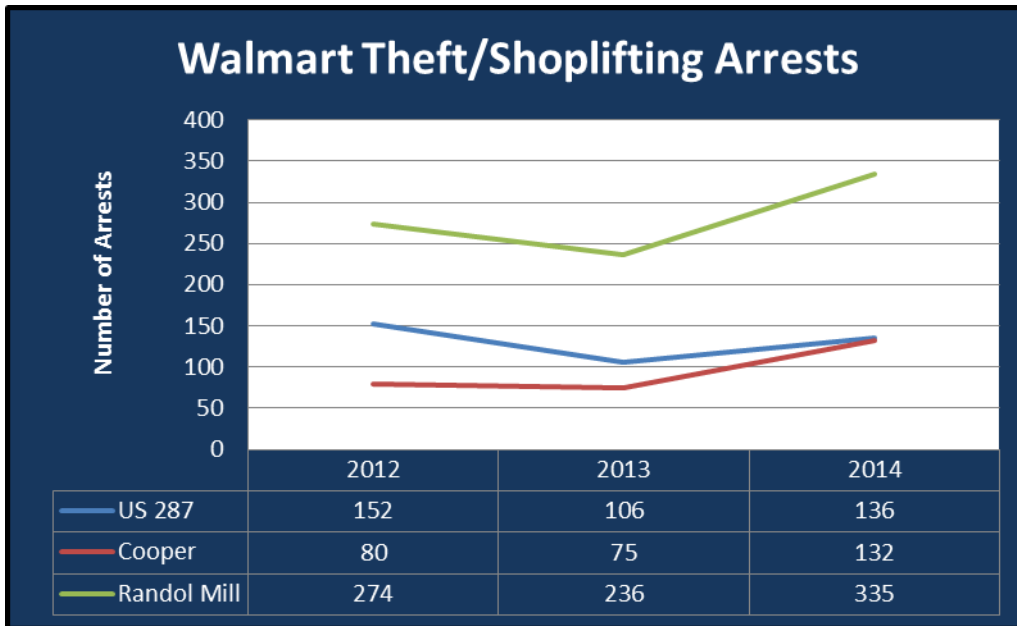


Figure 7 - Theft/Shoplifting Arrests 2012-2014

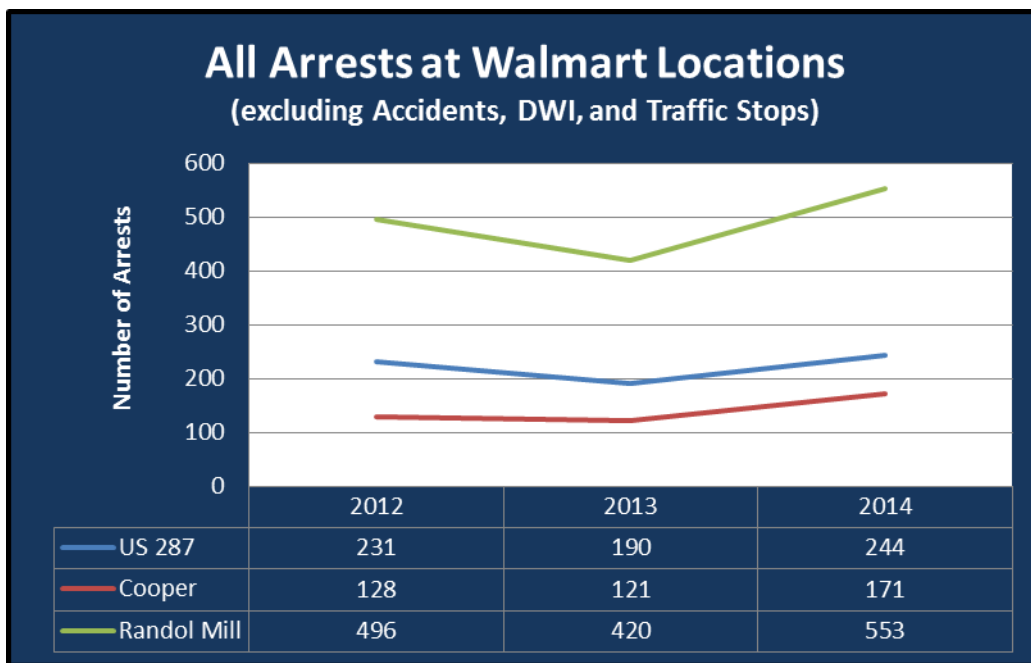


Figure 8 – Arrests for All Offenses 2012-2014

CALLS FOR SERVICE - All Walmart Locations										
Theft/Shoplifting										
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Difference	% Change	Hours Saved
Oct 2014-Mar 2015	108	94	127	157	74	110	670			
Oct 2015-Mar 2016	73	67	69	74	55	53	391	-279	-41.6%	-1,116
All Other Offenses										
Oct 2014-Mar 2015	88	111	104	90	87	108	588			
Oct 2015-Mar 2016	102	97	98	117	105	85	604	16	2.7%	64
Total Hours Saved								-263	-20.9%	-1,052
CALLS RESULTING IN ARREST - All Walmart Locations										
Theft/Shoplifting										
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Difference	% Change	Hours Saved
Oct 2014-Mar 2015	59	56	80	89	48	68	400			
Oct 2015-Mar 2016	22	25	24	38	23	24	156	-244	-61.0%	-976
All Other Offenses										
Oct 2014-Mar 2015	10	14	14	10	15	16	79			
Oct 2015-Mar 2016	10	10	7	8	11	8	54	-25	-31.6%	-100
Total Hours Saved								-269	-56.2%	-1,076

Figure 9 - Reductions in Calls for Service, Arrests, and Manpower Hours

Offenders Encountered by Location - October 1, 2015 - March 31, 2016							
Location	Apprehensions	Disqualified	Qualified	Qualification %	Accepted	Accepted %	% Reduction in Calls to LE
Cooper	101	56	45	45%	44	98%	44%
US 287	81	68	13	16%	13	100%	16%
Randol Mill	478	348	130	27%	126	97%	26%
Total	660	472	188	28%	183	97%	28%

Figure 10 - Offenders Encountered During the Pilot Program

REDUCTION IN ALL CALLS FOR SERVICE - BY LOCATION									
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Difference	% Change
US Highway 287 Location									
Oct 2014-Mar 2015	51	50	47	53	45	47	293		
Oct 2015-Mar 2016	45	54	43	77	52	42	313	20	6.8%
S. Cooper Street Location									
Oct 2014-Mar 2015	52	51	57	73	54	51	338		
Oct 2015-Mar 2016	37	41	54	26	38	20	216	-122	-36.1%
Randol Mill Location									
Oct 2014-Mar 2015	93	104	127	121	62	120	627		
Oct 2015-Mar 2016	93	69	70	88	70	76	466	-161	-25.7%
ALL LOCATIONS									
Oct 2014-Mar 2015	196	205	231	247	161	218	1258		
Oct 2015-Mar 2016	175	164	167	191	160	138	995	-263	-20.9%

Figure 11 - Reduction in Calls for Service by Location

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Wal-Mart's Impact on Local Police Costs

Harrisville, Utah

Calls to the local police department climbed by one-third following the opening of a Wal-Mart supercenter, forcing the town to hire two more officers. (Associated Press, May 22, 2004)

Many cities and towns are reporting that big-box retailers generate large numbers of police calls—far more than local businesses do. Shoplifting, check fraud, and traffic accidents are the most common causes. Each call can absorb hours of police time, creating new costs for local government and reducing police presence and response times in other areas.

Tucson, Arizona — For four years running, the Wal-Mart supercenter on the southwest side of town has generated more police calls than any other site in Tucson. Police responded to 908 calls in 2005 and 1,195 calls in 2004. Nearly half were for shoplifting. "Wal-Mart's aggressive security staff doesn't hesitate to call police," said a department spokesperson. (*Arizona Daily Star*, Jan. 11, 2006)

Vista, California — A constant stream of arrests at Wal-Mart contributed to a 24 percent rise in the crime rate. (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, Jun. 5, 2003)

Port Richey, Florida — One in four arrests are made at Wal-Mart, which is straining the police department. Since the store opened, non-emergency response times have risen significantly, while traffic citations have plummeted. The town hired one additional officer when Wal-Mart arrived and the police chief says they need two more, which would cost the city more than the \$75,000 the store generates in tax revenue. (*St. Petersburg Times*, May 20, 2002)

Royal Palm Beach, Florida — The arrival of Home Depot, Lowe's, Wal-Mart, and other chains along State Road 7 has resulted in an additional 1,500 police calls each year, forcing the town to hire more officers and build a new police station near the retail strip. (*Sun-Sentinel*, Feb. 21, 2005)

Beech Grove, Indiana — The town hired an additional police officer at a total cost of

\$75,000 a year to handle the additional burden of a new Wal-Mart. (*The Indianapolis Star*, Mar. 17, 2004)

Fishers, Indiana — The town reported over 400 police calls a year from a Wal-Mart supercenter. (*The Indianapolis Star*, Mar. 17, 2004)



Photo by Ryan Ozawa

Epping, New Hampshire — Police Lieutenant Mike Wallace said, "Because there's a lot of time spent at Wal-Mart, the rest of the town is affected by that . . . There's not as much time for direct patrols." Town officials turned down Wal-Mart's request to have its store open 24-hours, because the store was already overburdening the police force. Calls to the police, arrests, and complaints filed at the store in its first four months of operation led to a 7.5 percent increase in the crime rate. (*Union Leader*, May 23, 2004 and Nov. 16, 2005)

Bethlehem, New York — After three years in business, Wal-Mart is a constant destination for police in this affluent Albany suburb. The supercenter, which was given a property tax break of nearly \$50,000, has taxed cops to the tune of 1,175 calls for service since 2004. The developer of the store had predicted only a "minor impact" on police, estimating 4-5 calls a month in an impact report submitted to the town. "He was extremely low on his estimate," Bethlehem Police Lt. Thomas Heffernan said. (*The Times Union*, Dec. 28, 2006)

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Dallas, Texas

Small towns are not the only ones reporting problems. A memo from the Police Department said a new Wal-Mart store would dramatically increase the workload for officers and result in longer response times for calls. (*The Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 5, 2002)

Pineville, North Carolina — The town added some six million square feet of new retail, including a major shopping center, big-box stores, chain restaurants, and gas stations. But the stores are costing the town a fortune in police time, forcing Pineville to raise property tax rates across the board in 2002. (*Charlotte Observer*, May 28, 2003)

Canton, Ohio — In the first half of 2008, Canton police were called to the city's two Wal-Mart stores a total of 425 times. Shoplifting accusations accounted for 190 of those calls. The crime-related problems faced by both stores are a problem for the Canton Municipal Courts, so much that Court Administrator Michael Kochera said an additional bailiff may be hired just to handle booking misdemeanor offenders. (*Canton Repository*, Jul. 16, 2008)

Moraine, Ohio — Police calls almost tripled after a Wal-Mart opened in 2003. (*Dayton Daily News*, Aug. 11, 2005)

East Lampeter, Pennsylvania — District Judge Ronald Savage has had to add more days to his monthly court calendar just to deal with crimes at Wal-Mart, which generates almost one-third of his non-traffic criminal violations, criminal misdemeanors, and felony complaints—a number the judge described as "astronomical." (*Intelligencer Journal*, Aug. 18, 2003)

Ephrata, Pennsylvania — A 203,000-square-foot Wal-Mart had dramatically increased the police force's workload. "Bad checks, use of stolen credit cards. ... During a busy week, we'll have three to five retail theft arrests, and with each arrest, that ties up an officer who has to go down, take a person into custody' and follow up with paperwork and possibly a court appearance," said police detective Brad Ortenzi. (*Sunday News*, Jun. 8, 2003)

North Lebanon, Pennsylvania — A new Wal-Mart generates 200 police calls a year for

this small township. "If we had known the number of calls, we probably would have considered an increase in officers," police chief Kim Wolfe said. "We just had no idea what it would be like. It doesn't matter what time of the day or night; we get calls there." (*The Lebanon Daily News*, Jan. 27, 2005)

South Strabane, Pennsylvania— South Strabane police have experienced a sharp rise in calls since Wal-Mart opened in 2000. Wal-Mart generates more police calls than any other place in town, averaging about one a day, which strains the 15-man force. "It's a burden. It costs me overtime," police Chief Don Zofchak said, noting the department has had to cut back on neighborhood patrols because of Wal-Mart. Officials have not undertaken a fiscal impact study and do not know whether Wal-Mart costs the town more than it generates in tax revenue. (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 27, 2005)

West Sadsbury, Pennsylvania — Police calls rose dramatically when Wal-Mart opened. "It has overwhelmed us at times," according to Police Chief John Slauch, who said added tax revenue from the store did not cover the extra costs. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, Apr. 12, 2004)

Rock Hill, South Carolina — Rock Hill Police Chief John Gregory needs to hire six more patrol officers, a major issue as the city works out its annual budget. Police are expecting a new burden when a second Wal-Mart supercenter opens, generating waves of traffic and the potential for hundreds of more calls. The existing Wal-Mart is the top location for car accidents in the city. (*The Herald*, Apr. 17, 2008)

Woodstock, Virginia — The chief of police reported that one-quarter of the town's police calls in 2001—127 calls in all—were for Wal-Mart. He described it as a "nightmare." (Memo from the Front Royal, Virginia, Chief of Police, 2003)

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Tampa Bay Walmarts get thousands of police calls. You paid the bill.

By ZACHARY T. SAMPSON, LAURA C. MOREL, and ELI MURRAY

May 11, 2016

Design and graphics by MARTIN FROBISHER and ELI MURRAY

Times Staff

Police come to shoo away panhandlers, referee parking disputes and check on foul-mouthed teenagers.

They are called to arrest the man who drinks a 98-cent iced tea without paying and capture the customer who joyrides on a motorized shopping cart.

BODY CAM VIDEO

Police officers on duty, at Walmart

The calls eat up hours of officers' time. They all start at one place: Walmart.

Law enforcement logged nearly 16,800 calls in one year to Walmarts in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco and Hernando counties



, according to a *Tampa Bay Times* analysis. That's two calls an hour, every hour, every day.

Local Walmarts, on average, generated four times as many calls as nearby Targets, the *Times* found. Many individual supercenters attracted more calls than the much larger WestShore Plaza mall.



When it comes to calling the cops, Walmart is such an outlier compared with its competitors that experts criticized the corporate giant for shifting too much of its security burden onto taxpayers. Several local law enforcement officers also emphasized that all the hours spent at Walmart cut into how often they can patrol other neighborhoods and prevent other crimes.

"They're a huge problem in terms of the amount of time that's spent there," said Tampa police Officer James Smith, who

specializes in retail crime. “We are, as a department, at the mercy of what they want to do.”

The *Times* reviewed thousands of records and interviewed dozens of officers and experts to provide an unprecedented look at the impact 53 Walmarts had on local policing.

Among the findings:

- Sheriff’s deputies in Hillsborough, Pasco and Hernando counties were called to individual Walmart stores more than to any other location — by far. The same went for police in Largo, Pinellas Park, Tarpon Springs, Dade City, Plant City, Brooksville and Port Richey. For authorities in Pinellas and St. Petersburg, Walmarts were the second busiest locations.
- Officers logged fewer than 500 calls for violence, drugs or weapons. They took roughly another 7,000 calls for potential thefts. An even bigger category was general disorder, everything from suspected trespassing to parking violations, lost property and people sleeping outside stores. Those roughly 9,000 calls consumed hundreds of hours of officers’ time, but resulted in just a few hundred arrests. 
- Many businesses paid a lot more in property taxes than the local Walmart but were much less of a burden on police. The Tyrone Square Mall in St. Petersburg, for instance, paid nearly four times as much in taxes as three nearby supercenters combined. Still, the mall attracted fewer police calls.
- Officers know Walmart is such a regular trouble spot that they routinely show up without being called.  They simply hover around stores and parking lots to avert further issues, providing even more taxpayer-funded crime prevention. The *Times* found 6,200 of these unsolicited visits on top of the 16,800 other calls.

Walmart stores, with heavy foot traffic and cavernous layouts, are natural targets for shoplifters, panhandlers and other opportunists. Many are located in disadvantaged areas prone to more trouble. The retailer knows all of that, experts said, but doesn't do enough to address the problems, despite ample resources. Walmart, they said, lays out its stores in a way that invites trouble and often doesn't have enough uniformed employees to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Companies should do as much as they can to keep their properties in order before leaning on police, said Charles Fishman, author of *The Wal-Mart Effect*, a book about the retailer's growth and social impact. He equated Walmart's high volume of calls to the parents of a misbehaving 11-year-old who call 911 every time their child acts out.

"That's not what police are for," he said.

Walmart said it is doing what it must to thwart thieves and protect its merchandise. Spokesman Aaron Mullins said the company's specialists do "a really great job of identifying people who are breaking the law" and they "partner very closely with local law enforcement."

"Any type of criminal activity that might be happening in our stores we take very seriously," he said, "and we have processes in place to address that aggressively."

Thousands of calls, little security

Walmart's approach to handling problems is more "tough love" than "let's talk it out." The style descends from founder Sam Walton, a scrappy, no-nonsense businessman who famously wrote

in his autobiography that theft is “one of the biggest enemies of profitability.”

His company became the world’s largest retailer, far exceeding other big box chains. Everything about Walmart is enormous: about 11,000 stores in 28 countries, 140 million weekly customers in the United States alone, \$15 billion in annual profits.

But Walmart squeezes those profits from razor thin margins. The theft of a \$4 pair of socks can obliterate the return on the next \$100 in sales. So the company, experts said, relies heavily on police to protect its bottom line, starting with shoplifting.

Of the 7,000 calls in Tampa Bay in 2014 for suspected thefts, many were for items totaling less than \$300, the threshold for when petty theft becomes grand theft. The *Times* found calls for items worth much less — a \$10 gas can, \$3 eye drops, \$2 chocolates.

Another 9,000 calls were for basic disorder, everything from dealing with the drunk man talking loudly at the deli to checking on juveniles suspected of skipping school. Officers also responded for 911 hang-ups, follow-up investigations, or simply to take down information and collect lost property.

Those calls — some made by Walmart employees, others by customers — included more than 1,000 for suspected trespassers, another 1,000 for suspicious people and cars, and another 1,000 for suspected panhandling, loitering, noise complaints and “disturbances.”

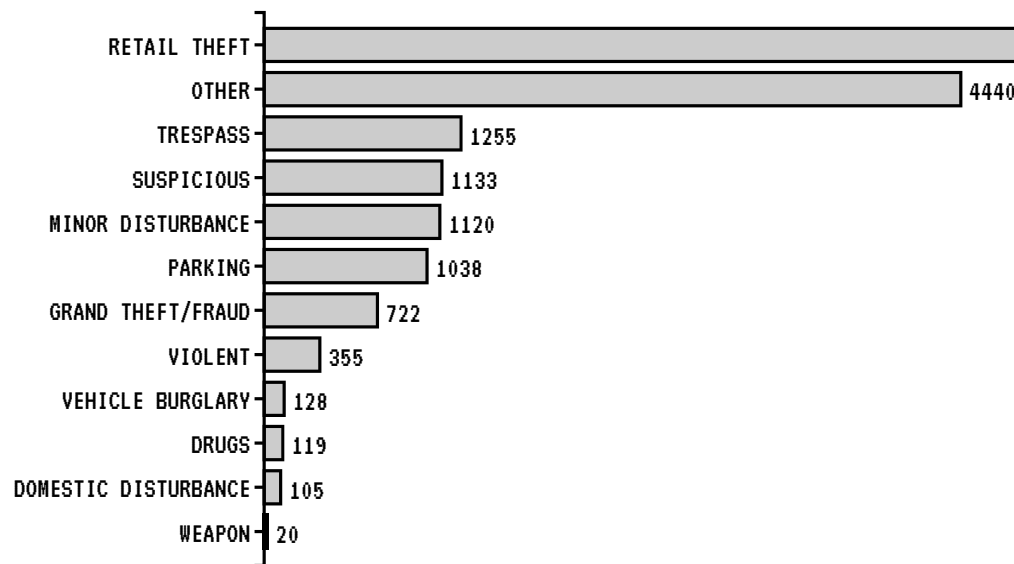
“Law enforcement becomes in effect a taxpayer-paid private security source for Walmart,”



said New York-based leading retail analyst Burt Flickinger.

Why they show up

**Tampa Bay’s Walmarks attracted more than 16,000 calls in
2014**



CALLS

ARRESTS

Source: *Times* analysis

Perhaps more than any other big-box retailer, Walmart caters to low-income shoppers looking to buy everything from vegetables to televisions as cheaply as possible. Walmart sometimes opens stores in neighborhoods where the threat of crime is higher. Employees at many stores know that at least a few desperate, drug-addled or ill-intentioned customers will pass through their doors every day.

A lot of shoppers “are struggling,” said Michael Garafano, 23, a former maintenance worker, cashier and floor associate at two stores in Brandon. “So there’s just a lot of stress.”

That’s all the more reason for a for-profit company like Walmart to adequately secure its stores, experts said. One solution: Hire more uniformed security guards. Research shows that they effectively deter misbehaving customers and can cut down on theft. Malls, for instance, often employ guards to manage everyday nuisances like noise complaints and loitering teens. Some Publix stores have guards in brown uniforms near the door.

Private security guards perform “all of those policing functions to both prevent the low-level disorder and also to respond to it, only calling police if in their judgment it might turn violent,” said Michael Scott, director of the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing.

Walmart makes plenty of money and attracts so many police calls “that it would be reasonable to expect them to hire their own private security,” said Scott, also a former Lauderhill police chief in Broward County.

Walmart would not say how many of its Tampa Bay stores have uniformed guards. *Times* reporters visited all of the area’s supercenters and regular-sized Walmarts and noticed only five had a security officer, all located at the entrance. A half-dozen had greeters near the door, an old Walmart staple whose job it is to say hello to the streams of people coming in and out. The company recently announced plans to add more greeters to stores nationwide. Starting in October, Walmart paid to have an off-duty police officer posted at one St. Petersburg store, on 34th Street N, for 12 hours a day.

Garafano did not remember seeing many uniformed guards at the two stores where he worked. He said more security would have helped.

“If you see a guy in a uniform or something,” he said, “you’re probably not going to steal anything or cause trouble because you’ll think, this guy’s going to bust me.”

More uniformed guards are just one option. Research shows that firm, experienced managers or well-trained employees can easily deal with many small issues. They can scare off loiterers or banish drunk customers.

Walmart deals with high staff turnover, said Flickinger, the New York-based retail analyst, and it eliminated many management positions in recent years to offset wage increases.

“Walmart looks at everything as cost instead of investment,” he said.

'Tremendous strain' on police

The heavy load weighs on police in every Tampa Bay county.

The *Times* asked local law enforcement agencies for the three places their officers responded to most in 2014. The lists included parks and busy intersections, hospitals and mental health facilities. A few malls made it. So did a retirement community and a youth shelter. The lists hardly ever included large retailers such as Target, Publix and the Home Depot.

But Walmart dominated.

Pasco sheriff's deputies, for instance, were called to two individual Walmarts more than to any other commercial location in their jurisdiction. Walmarts also ranked No. 1 and No. 2 for the Hernando County Sheriff's Office. In Largo, Walmart was first and third on the list.

Hillsborough sheriff's deputies ended up at a Walmart on Fletcher Avenue more than any other location. What came second? Another Walmart. What was third? Another Walmart. In fact, seven of the Sheriff's Office's 10 busiest locations were Walmarts.



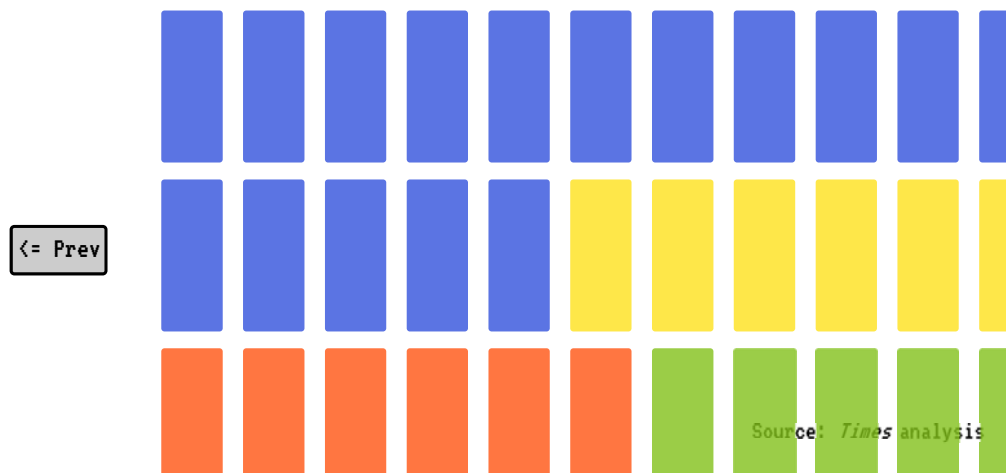
"It is a tremendous strain on manpower," Sheriff's Col. Greg Brown wrote in an email



to the *Times*.

At Walmart more than anywhere else

Eighteen of the 39 locations listed by police were supercenters.



Some overworked agencies have demanded that Walmart make changes. The police chief in Beech Grove, Ind., once deemed the local Walmart a nuisance and threatened it with fines of up to \$2,500 for every small shoplifting call. About three months later, calls had fallen by almost two-thirds.

“At what point do you say, this one individual is taking enough resources that it is interfering with other functions?” said Seth Stoughton, a University of South Carolina law professor and former Tallahassee police officer. “There are other jobs that we could be doing, and we need to change the way that we respond.”

In Port Richey, population 2,700, the department’s handful of patrol officers fielded more than 450 calls in a year from the one Walmart in its jurisdiction, nearly three times as many as their next busiest commercial location, a WaWa gas station. Those calls led to about 200 arrests.

In August, a Walmart employee called the department after a 33-year-old man stole a \$6.39 electric toothbrush. The officer arrived in three minutes, talked to a Walmart employee, arrested the man, and then made the 19-mile trip to the Land O’Lakes jail. After finishing the paperwork, the officer was free to take another call.

Total elapsed time: 2 ½ hours.

Port Richey Assistant Chief William Ferguson calculated that the arrests chewed up nearly 500 hours of officer time, at a department

that sometimes has only two officers on patrol. That doesn't include all the other calls that didn't lead to arrests.

Port Richey police asked Walmart about hiring off-duty officers, but company officials never responded, he said. The city would be better served, Ferguson said, if police officers used all that time to drive through neighborhoods and head off other crimes.

"They can't do that when they're spending God knows how many hours at Walmart," he said.

"It's almost like we're Walmart's personal police transportation agency."

Far above Target

Walmart's aggressive approach, the *Times* found, leads it to demand far more from police than Target.

Reporters compared a year's worth of calls at Walmarts and Targets within the same police jurisdictions or just a few miles apart. The 10 Walmarts had more than 5,100 calls compared with fewer than 1,100 at the 10 Targets.



In Pinellas Park, for instance, a supercenter on U.S. 19 competes with a Target less than a mile away.

Walmart calls — 712.

Target calls — 195.

In Clearwater, the Target on Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard is bigger than the nearby Walmart.

Walmart calls — 392.

Target calls — 107.

The discrepancy was more stark on Bruce B. Downs Boulevard near the Hillsborough-Pasco county line.

Walmart calls — 531.

Target calls — 52.

Walmart vs Target

The Times reviewed 10 Walmarths and close-by Targets.
In every case, Walmart had more calls.



[<== PREV](#)

Source: *Times* analysis

In most cases, the Walmart stores were larger than the Targets. The *Times* accounted for the size difference by calculating the number of calls for every 10,000 square feet of store space. Even then, the Walmarths averaged more than three times the calls, producing about 30 per 10,000 square feet compared with only about nine at Target.

Reporters also considered that Walmart stores are often open overnight, while Targets close at 11 p.m. or earlier. But the *Times* analysis found that most police calls came during the afternoon and evening hours when both Walmart and Target are open. Only about 11 percent came during the overnight hours.

Unlike Walmart, Target seems to have more uniformed employees strolling the aisles, which helps cut down on problems, said Flickinger, a retail consultant who has worked with many national chains. Walmart's choice to stay open late and its success in attracting shoppers does not absolve it of the responsibility to reduce problems on its property, he added.

“Rather than store security and store management taking care of the problem, as many other retailers would take care of the security,” he said, “the call is made to (Tampa Bay) law enforcement.”

Target declined to comment on its security or its competition with Walmart.

In 2012, Target's then-vice president for assets protection, Brad Brekke, said it was “no secret that retail theft — particularly low-level offending — consumes an enormous amount of public and private resources.”

“Here at Target, we are taking an active and engaged role in alleviating some of this burden on the criminal justice system,” he said.

Emily Gold LaGratta, who co-authored a 2012 Center for Court Innovation shoplifting study in conjunction with Target, would not comment on Target's approach specifically, but said that “relatively small tweaks to (corporate) policies could have an impact on how many times police get called.” One option? A retailer might only call police for repeat offenders, or if the offender steals items that exceed a specified threshold, such as \$50.

A decade ago, for instance, Walmart announced plans to stop calling authorities for some first-time shoplifters who stole items

totaling less than \$25. Walmart would not talk about whether it is still enforcing that policy today.

Wyatt Jefferies, a Walmart spokesman, spoke more openly about a diversion program the company adopted in select places about three years ago. Instead of calling police, the store gives first-time shoplifters the option of paying restitution and completing online courses. Eight Tampa Bay stores are enrolled, he said, and the retailer is assessing whether it will expand the program here and elsewhere.

“We’ve already seen significant impact from their ability to alleviate pressure on local law enforcement for low-risk offenders,” Jefferies said.

Walmart attracts more foot traffic than other retailers. More customers, Jefferies said, means more potential for crime, which results in more calls to police.

“It almost looks like Walmart is being penalized for following the law in a way,” he said.

Walking through 'chaos'

On a Tuesday afternoon, Wesley Jennings stepped into a Tampa Walmart with a *Times* reporter and immediately began describing how the retailer creates an environment that encourages problems.

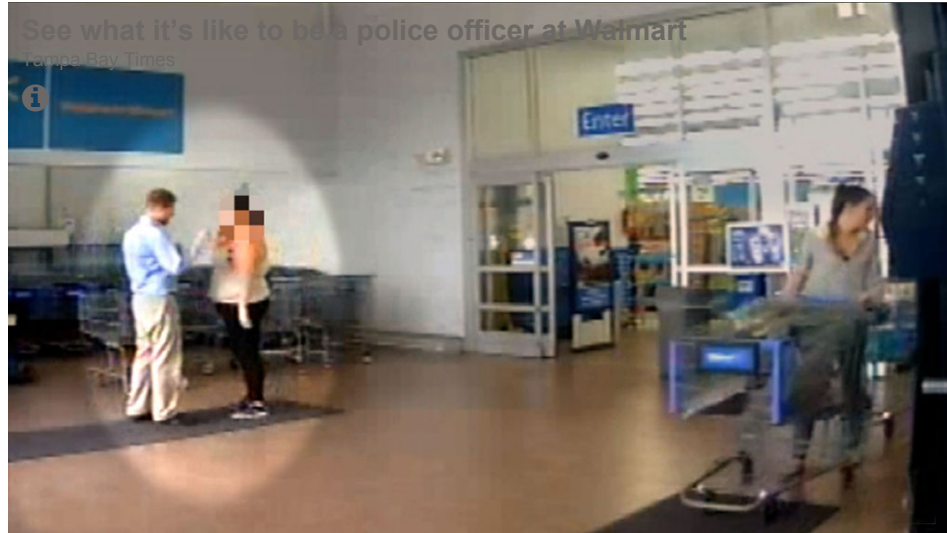
The store was loud and frenetic, the fluorescent lights extra bright. He saw racks overflowing with clothes, a shelf crammed with printer cartridges, boxes scattered in the middle of an aisle.

“There’s just very limited open space,” said Jennings, a University of South Florida professor with degrees in criminology and psychology, “and then there’s literally tons of products.”

Near the electronics department, tall cardboard displays blocked sightlines, creating pockets where an opportunist could feel alone, unseen, safe to steal. He peered up at the ceiling-mounted video cameras. Shoplifters notice those, he said, but often think they aren’t working or can’t zoom in close enough to record them shoving items into their pockets.

Jennings saw fewer than a dozen uniformed employees walking inside the 212,000-square-foot building. Nowhere did he see uniformed security.

Stores are like neighborhoods, he said. If they look tidy, research shows, they signal that the residents are paying attention. Walmarts can feel messy and disheveled. The “chaos,” Jennings said, allows troublemakers to rationalize that the company doesn’t care. It also sends the message that they might get away with it.



Last August, a teenager at a supercenter in Hudson pocketed an \$18 audio cable. A specially trained Walmart employee who works undercover to catch thieves spotted him. When loss prevention associates see a shoplifter, they dart between aisles, shadowing their targets and relaying movements into radios or cell phones before surrounding suspects at the door.

A loss prevention associate walked the teenager to a narrow office and called the Pasco County Sheriff's Office. Two deputies spent more than 50 minutes working on the call.

The boy cursed and hung his head. He had more than a hundred dollars in his pocket. He said he hadn't planned to steal anything when he walked into the store.

"I could have paid for ... nine of them," he said.

A body camera captured Deputy Jason Logue reflecting on Walmart's surveillance system and the volume of calls at the supercenter.

"Unfortunately, it just seems to be a big revolving door," said Logue, before leading the teenager to a patrol car. "We do all this work, and then I feel like a month later I'm dealing with the same guy all over again."

A taxpayer problem

Walmart pays taxes — a lot of taxes — and like any taxpayer is entitled to government services including help from police. The company is a “commercial citizen,” noted Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, that “doesn’t deserve to get ripped off by people.”

But other companies, including some of Walmart’s competitors, pay a lot of taxes, too, and they don’t have nearly the same impact on police.

In east Hillsborough, for instance, a Walmart paid close to the same amount in property taxes as a nearby Target. But the Walmart also had more than four times as many police calls, the *Times* found.

In Clearwater, a Walmart on U.S. 19 paid less in property taxes than a nearby Target. Yet police wound up at the Walmart more than three times as often.

In Plant City, the Walmart on James L. Redman Parkway was the eighth biggest taxpayer, just ahead of a nearby shopping plaza with a Publix, Bealls, CVS and several restaurants. Still, the Walmart alone had nearly three times more calls than the entire plaza.

The Walmart, in fact, had more police calls than the shopping plaza *plus* the city's seven other biggest taxpayers combined.

"We always have to plan for a busy day at Walmart," said Plant City police Sgt. Alfred Van Duyne.



The *Times* also compared Walmart's share of police calls to its share of all the property taxes paid in four cities. To do this, reporters focused only on calls to properties that paid taxes, and eliminated calls involving places like parks, intersections and most churches. The result? Walmart's slice of calls was consistently larger than its slice of tax payments. Much larger.

Take the Broad Street supercenter in Brooksville. Walmart's portion of police calls was twice as big as its portion of real estate taxes paid.



The gap was even wider at supercenters in Plant City, Port Richey and St. Petersburg.

When the *Times* asked about the volume of calls, Jefferies noted in an email that Walmart paid nearly \$15 million in annual property taxes across Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco and Hernando counties. He also offered that the company contributed millions of dollars to charities across Florida. In Tampa Bay, Walmart has donated to shelters and toy drives and sponsored community events.

"Walmart is a proud member of the Tampa Bay community," Jefferies wrote. "We've created job opportunities ... and

strengthened communities, including police and fire departments, throughout the state of Florida.”

Waiting for more calls

Responding to Walmart has become so routine that officers show up without even being called. They drive slowly through the parking lot or stop to write unrelated reports. Other times they go inside and walk the aisles, or just buy a soda.

For patrol officers, these unsolicited visits to Walmarts are an easy decision, said Scott, the former Lauderhill police chief.

“Look, I either get called there later, or I go there now and prevent things,” he said.

The *Times* found more than 6,200 of these visits, on top of the other 16,800 calls.

Garafano, the former Walmart employee in Brandon, said he sometimes saw sheriff's patrol cars parked near the supercenter on East Brandon Boulevard, even when nothing was happening.

“It was almost like they were kind of just waiting to get a call,” he said.

Assistant Chief Ferguson, who worked for Tampa police from 1989 until 2014 before moving to Port Richey, remembers shift supervisors conducting daily roll call in the parking lot of a Walmart on Dale Mabry Highway. A dozen cruisers would pull in, and a jail transport van was often parked outside, too, he said. Officers hoped the show of force would stop troublemakers before they even walked inside the store.

Targets did not receive so much unsolicited attention, the *Times* found.

Police, for instance, conducted nearly 2,400 of what are often called “directed patrols” at six Walmarts compared with about 1,150 at six nearby Targets. Not all agencies performed directed patrols — or recorded them — in the same way, so the *Times* limited the comparison to stores within the same jurisdictions. In Clearwater, for instance, police logged 273 directed patrols at a Walmart compared with 76 at a larger Target fewer than three miles away.

The directed patrols, Scott said, in some ways reward bad behavior: Walmart creates so much work for police that they feel obligated to give the retailer even more attention, free of charge. That further cuts into the time officers can spend at other places, he said.

“Obviously all of those other businesses are not getting that officer’s attention,” he said. “All of the residential areas around (the store) are not getting it.”

With no fix, the problems continue

As long as calls keep coming, police will keep showing up. It's their job to respond.



“We’re going to service them, whether it’s twice a day or 200 times a day,” said Van Duyne, the Plant City police sergeant.

To cut down on at least some of those calls, a few Tampa Bay agencies are experimenting with stationing cruisers and portable cameras in parking lots. Others, including the Hillsborough Sheriff’s Office and Zephyrhills police, have reached out to Walmart to discuss solutions.

Police can make small fixes. But Ronald Clarke, a Rutgers University criminal justice professor, said the onus is on Walmart to change its policies.

“The public sector is sort of just a victim of this particular problem,” said Clarke, who wrote a Department of Justice guide on shoplifting prevention. “There's nothing much they can do. The people that can do anything about it are the private agencies that are selling the goods. That's really the truth.”

For now, the calls continue to pour in.

The *Times* checked four area supercenters — one each in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco and Hernando — and found that total calls remained steady from 2014 to 2015.

At the Zephyrhills Walmart, retail theft arrests nearly doubled in the first six months of 2015. Capt. Derek Brewer said a Walmart manager attributed the increase to better trained loss prevention associates stopping more people.

In Clearwater last May, two Walmart associates spotted a man in a green shirt take a 98-cent bottle of sweet tea from a cooler, drink most of it and set it down in the candy department. A loss prevention specialist stopped him at the exit.

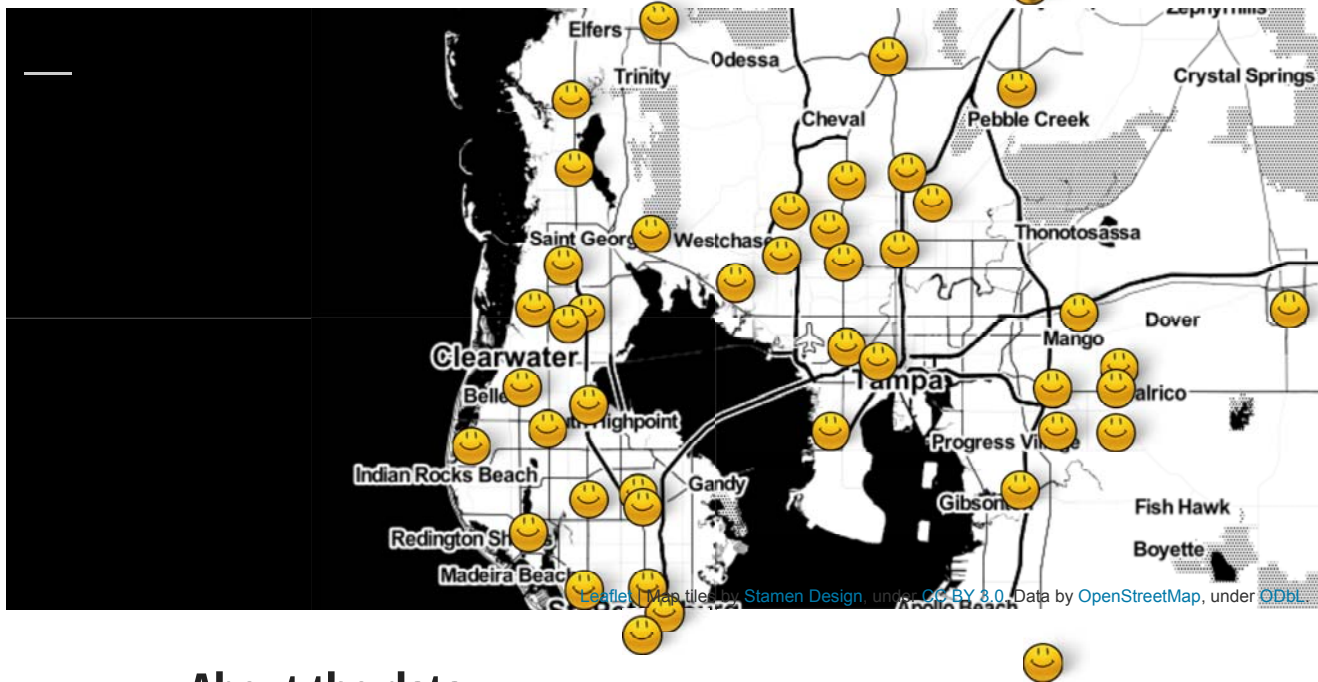
A police officer worked two hours on the case, including filling out paperwork for a petty theft charge. Before posting bail, the man spent 10 days in jail, a cost of about \$1,230 to taxpayers.

The officer asked the man what happened.

“I was thirsty,” he said.

Times news researchers John Martin, Caryn Baird and Carolyn Edds contributed to this report. Contact Zachary T. Sampson at zsampson@tampabay.com or follow [@zacksampson](https://twitter.com/zacksampson), Laura C. Morel at lmorel@tampabay.com or follow [@lauracmorel](https://twitter.com/lauracmorel), and Eli Murray at emurray@tampabay.com or follow [@Eli_Mur](https://twitter.com/Eli_Mur).

Find your local Walmart



About the data

For this project, *Tampa Bay Times* reporters requested police calls from the 15 law enforcement agencies that patrolled at least one Walmart in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco or Hernando counties in 2014.

Authorities provided the *Times* with records of 29,669 calls. The *Times* excluded 6,100 calls such as emergency medical situations, calls to assist other agencies, warrant checks and probation violations. They also eliminated duplicate calls, including in Tampa, where police sometimes logged one incident twice under different two-letter codes. This process meant erring on the side of undercounting police calls to Walmarts.

Sometimes authorities attributed calls to Walmart that did not take place on store property, including many traffic crashes and violations that occurred on the streets near a Walmart. The reporters could eliminate most of those calls, though it's possible some made it into the final count.

The *Times* also separated out roughly 6,200 calls commonly known as directed patrols or business checks. They are calls self-initiated by the officers, not by a complaint from someone at a store.

After stripping excluded calls and directed patrols, the *Times* found that local authorities responded to Walmarts in Tampa Bay nearly 16,800 times in one year.

Reporters also asked each police agency for a list of the locations where their officers or deputies received the most calls. Most of the agencies provided the *Times* with their own filtered lists. The *Times* reporters then excluded calls logged to police headquarters, jails or courthouses. Brooksville, St. Petersburg, and Plant City provided spreadsheets of every call for service in 2014, from which reporters determined the busiest locations. The reporters filtered the data for those three agencies to exclude off-duty calls and directed patrols.

For the tax comparisons, reporters requested the total amount of property taxes paid within St. Petersburg, Brooksville, Port Richey and Plant City. They then calculated a percentage for how much Walmart contributed to each city. For most cities, the *Times* only looked at real estate taxes, excluding tangible taxes. The Brooksville property tax comparison includes tangible taxes because the tax collector's office could not provide a breakdown. Reporters did not look at state sales tax records because they are exempt from public record, and because sales tax is ultimately paid by the customer, not the store.

The arrest data includes both physical arrests, where a suspect was taken to jail, and notices to appear, citations that order a suspect to show up in court at a later date.

The *Times*, throughout its reporting, consulted with more than 55 law enforcement leaders and experts on retail crime. Reporters contacted Walmart three times, once with a summary of their findings.

About the reporters



Wal-Mart losing \$3 billion a year from thefts

The Associated Press
Jun. 13, 2007 11:38 AM

NEW YORK - Shoppers at Wal-Mart stores across America are loading carts with merchandise - maybe a flat-screen TV, a few DVDs and a six pack of beer - and strolling out without paying. Employees also are helping themselves to goods they haven't paid for.

The world's largest retailer is saying little about these kinds of thefts, but its recent public disclosures that it is experiencing an increase in so-called shrinkage at its U.S. stores suggests that inventory losses due to shoplifting, employee theft, paperwork errors and supplier fraud could be worsening.

The hit is likely to rise to more than \$3 billion this year for Wal-Mart Stores Inc., which generated sales of \$348.6 billion last year, according to retail consultant Burt Flickinger III.

Flickinger and other analysts say the increase in theft may be tied to Wal-Mart's highly publicized decision last year to no longer prosecute minor cases of shoplifting in order to focus on organized shoplifting rings. Former employees also say staffing levels, including security personnel, have been reduced, making it easier for theft to occur. And a union-backed group critical of the retailer's personnel policies contends general worker discontent is playing a role.

Wal-Mart declined to offer any explanations for the rise in losses, but denied it has cut security staff and said employee morale is rising rather than falling.

Although Wal-Mart declined to reveal its shrinkage rate, analysts suspect Wal-Mart - which for years had a theft loss rate that was half that of its peers - is getting closer to the industry wide average. Theft is a big problem for all retailers, costing them \$41.6 billion last year, according to a joint study released Tuesday by the National Retail Federation and the University of Florida. The study found that the shrinkage rate as a percentage of sales ticked upward slightly to 1.61 percent of sales in 2006 from 1.60 percent in 2005.

Whatever the cause, such theft - which late founder Sam Walton once called one of retailers' top profit killers - adds one more challenge when Wal-Mart is already struggling with sluggish sales at its established stores due to an overall economic slowdown as well as its own stumbles in its home and apparel merchandising strategies.

Eduardo Castro-Wright, president and CEO of Wal-Mart's U.S. store division, briefly acknowledged the theft problem in a mid-May conference call with analysts. He cited shrinkage as well as increased markdowns and higher inventory for dragging down first-quarter profit margins.

"We are concerned about shrinkage and are investigating the cause and are taking steps to correct it," Castro-Wright said. Company officials won't comment on those countermeasures.

The industry's shrinkage rate has been generally declining since the mid-1990s as retailers have been investing in new technology such as closed circuit TVs, according to Richard Hollinger, professor of criminology at the University of Florida.

About 47 percent of the dollars lost came from employee theft, while shoplifting accounted for about 32 percent, according to the National Retail Federation report. Administrative errors account for 14 percent, while supplier fraud accounts for 4 percent. The remaining 3 percent is unaccounted for.

In one of the more brazen employee thefts, a man wearing dark clothing and a ski mask entered a Port Clinton, Ohio, Wal-Mart store last January at midnight unnoticed by employees and stole \$45,000 from the store safe. The store's night manager, Dana Walker, 30, was later arrested for the crime. He became a suspect because he knew the combination to the safe, police said.

The company's vociferous critic WakeUpWalMart.com, funded by the United Food and Commercial Workers which have been for years tried to organize the retailer's workers, publicized the company's decision last year to relax its zero-tolerance policy on shoplifting. The new policy seeks prosecutions of first-time offenders only if they are between ages 18 to 65 and steal at least \$25 worth of merchandise.

That change may have emboldened some folks to shoplift, said Mark Doyle, president of Jack L. Hayes International, a retail consultancy on loss prevention.

WakeUpWalMart.com and some former employees said Wal-Mart may also have been trying to appease complaints by some police departments that its stores tied up police with too many shoplifting calls. Wal-Mart has denied that.

Wal-Mart also may have been spooked by worries about lawsuits from wrongful death, unlawful imprisonment and other legal issues related to aggressively chasing down shoplifters. In March, Wal-Mart agreed to pay \$750,000 to the family of a suspected shoplifter who suffocated to death as loss prevention workers held him down in a parking lot outside a store in Atascocita, Texas. The shoplifter died in August 2005 in a parking lot, according to published reports.

The change in policy came at the same time the company began using more part-time workers - in part because of a new scheduling system that matches staffing more closely to peak shopping hours - and shifting security personnel, analysts and critics say. That has left the discount chain without an experienced and loyal staff to monitor what's strolling out its back and front doors, analysts and some former employees supplied by WakeUpWalMart.com said.

"The business is being run by bean counters. I am shocked at the Spartan level of staffing," said Flickinger, managing director of Strategic Resources Group. He added, "There are also morale issues. Workers feel that the company is taking care of itself."

While Wal-Mart denies that it has cut anti-theft jobs overall, it said it has adjusted staffing to put more personnel in stores in high-crime areas and fewer in stores with less trouble.

However, Dan Meyer, a former district loss prevention supervisor for several Wal-Mart stores in New Jersey disputes that. Meyer, who said he accepted a buyout last fall after almost 12 years with the company, said Wal-Mart reduced the number of loss prevention staff in each store last year and redesigned their jobs in a way that was less active and more administrative.

"That's why shrinkage is up," he said.

Meyer said he averaged 13 apprehensions a month during most of his time at Wal-Mart. That number dropped to three to four a month in the months before he left last October. Meyer said his totals dropped because there were fewer security staff and less support from his managers for aggressively rooting out theft.

WakeUpWalMart.com has linked rising theft to its claims that the company offers skimpy pay and benefits. Wal-Mart also faces a class-action lawsuit alleging female workers were passed over for men in pay and promotions.

"I am not the type to steal, but because we are so mistreated, when I saw things I just didn't do anything," said Gina Tuley, a former Wal-Mart bakery worker, who quit her job at the Seagoville, Texas, store in March. A big complaint was that her hours had been cut, reducing her take-home pay.

Wal-Mart defends its pay as competitive and its health care coverage as better than most retailers, and has denied gender discrimination.

Simley said an April survey of employees that showed rising job satisfaction suggests Tuley's attitude does not represent most Wal-Mart associates.

Even so, several former associates said in interviews that their bonuses have declined because of the rise in inventory losses. Wal-Mart's Simley disputes these claims, saying shrinkage was dropped from the bonus formula about a dozen years ago. It was Walton's idea to tie associates' bonuses to their store's theft levels to give them a vested interest in keeping theft in check.

Tuley said her bonus last year was \$300, down from \$800 the previous year.

Still, she said, "People would walk out with bags of merchandise ... I heard the alarms go off and people wouldn't even look," she added.