National City Police Department
Neighborhood Policing Team
Roosevelt Avenue Project

(Anti-Prostitution Effort)

ABSTRACT

Scanning: A large concentration of prostitutes on and about the area of Roosevelt Ave. An increasing number of calls for police service coupled with complaints being directed at city officials. Service calls and crime statistics revealed crime problems beyond the crime of prostitution itself. The area had a reputation of "seediness" perpetuated by a degenerating physical environment.

Analysis: The problem had existed for about 20 years. Traditional police responses had been used with mixed, but always temporary, results. Based upon data provided by the Crime Analysis Unit, the results of a community survey, knowledge of the history of prior enforcement tactics and results, and an assessment of environmental conditions, a response plan was formulated.

Response: The overall response was based loosely on the old "weed and seed" theory and approach. Initial response was direct law enforcement interaction, targeting violators on all levels, creating a police omnipresence. At the same time, a number of environmental, legal and social changes were being formulated. As the criminal element was being removed, the implementation of the changes began, made possible by a strong liaison with a number of public and private entities.

Assessment: The strong police presence with the actual physical removal of criminal perpetrators allowed the "seeds" an opportunity to "take root", creating the desired overall long term improvement. Positive feedback in the area was immediate in terms of the reduction of calls for service and perception of safety in the area. This was confirmed by statistics showing a 66% reduction in calls for service in the three months following completion of the project.
A. Scanning:

1. What was the nature of the problem?

A large concentration of prostitutes on and about the area of Roosevelt Ave, with the result being an increasing number of calls for police service coupled with complaints from the public being directed at the police department and city officials. On any given night, 20 to 30 prostitutes within a three block stretch of roadway was not an uncommon sight. Further, the crimes being perpetrated in the area were beyond that of prostitution itself. Drugs were prevalent, along with crimes against persons. The physical environment had deteriorated to the point of creating an unwelcome atmosphere for legitimate visitors to the area.

2. How was the problem identified?

Although the problem had existed for years, it had recently grown in size and complexity. Complaints from beat officers regarding the amount of time spent in the area reference calls, along with mere observations from police officials and the complaints from the public (or from city officials on behalf of the public) identified the issue as a significant problem.

3. Who identified the problem?

See above.
4. Far more problems are identified than can be explored adequately. How and why was the problem selected among others?

This problem had a much larger visually negative impact upon the city than other problems. Street prostitution is overt, "in your face" activity by its very nature. Further, the activity was centered around a main entrance point to the city and visible from the freeway. Therefore, a large number of motorists were exposed to a visually negative display during all hours. Also, the problem was multi-faceted, with a large amount of other criminal activity associated with (symptomatic of) prostitution.

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

Clearly there was a significant amount of peripheral/associated activity that accompanied the prostitution, or more specifically, the prostitutes. There were also some environmental/geographical issues that contributed to the problem (and in some cases existed because of the problem) however, prostitutes themselves, were targeted as the primary, underlying cause of problems in the area.

B. Analysis:

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

A community survey was conducted of those businesses and residents in the target area. It was important for us to determine if our perception of the problem was that of those being most affected, as the police perception of a problem is frequently not shared by the community it strives to serve. Further, the survey provided "insurance" or validity in terms of justifying our expenditure of time, resources, personnel, etc. to those critics who perceive prostitution as minor, victimless or less of a priority.
We also solicited data from the Crime Analysis unit in terms of calls for service, specific type of calls, most frequent location, etc. We also conduct both overt and covert observations of the target area, taking note of the physical environment of the target area and those geographic/environmental elements which were believed to be contributing to the problem. We also conducted overt and covert observations of the perpetrators. We video taped and photographed the physical setting and the offenders while engaged in acts of soliciting and loitering in the area. We conducted in-depth interviews of prostitutes and "Johns" as to why the area was attractive for them, rates of pay, "customer" likes and dislikes, prior criminal histories, sexual practices, drug use, pimp involvement, perception of police activity/action, family history and other sources of income. These interviews were conducted not only during the analysis phase, but throughout the duration of the project, as constant re-evaluation and analysis was important.

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

The problem had existed for about 20 years and was cyclic, with periods of less intensified criminal activity, usually following random and sporadic "stings" aimed at prostitutes and "Johns". The problem was identified as being at its worst ever just before implementation of the project.

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

The most easily identified offenders were the prostitutes themselves (approx. 500). Prostitutes were identified as belonging to one of three main categories: Professional circuit prostitutes, local professionals and all others, who consisted mainly of heavy drug users who prostitute for drugs or money to buy drugs and "weekender's" who supplement their income (part time job, public assistance, etc.) by prostituting on weekends. Professional circuit prostitutes worked a west coast circuit consisting primarily of Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix and Las Vegas.
They typically would work an area for 3 to 6 months, racking up a plethora of charges using false names, dates of birth and addresses. Once the prior arrests would "go to warrant" for failure to appear, they would move on to their next city of destination. Once they returned to the area a year or two later, most officers had forgotten them or at least the aliases previously used.

Pimps and those pandering (about 60 were identified) were also a significant element in the list of offenders. Less overt in practice than the prostitutes, they, nonetheless, provided a dangerous dimension to the overall equation.

At any given moment a "John" who was helping to perpetrate the crime, easily became a victim when robbed and/or beaten by a pimp or even a prostitute herself.

Certain businesses in the area, specifically the low-end motels that line Roosevelt Ave. were directly linked to the overall equation. Many relied on the illicit business provided by pimps, pander's, prostitutes and their dates. Legitimate visitors to the area had dropped off dramatically, so for many of the motels prostitution related activity was the only business on which they could count. At the same time, businesses were, in one sense, helping to perpetuate the problem and victimized by the problem at the same time.

Pimping, pandering and prostitution are monetary or economic criminal enterprises. The motivation of its participants is economically driven, even for "Johns". This realization was vitally important for the success of the project. Dissuading individuals from participating in this type of criminal activity from a moral or ethical standpoint is/was ineffective.

4. What harms resulted from the problem?

Perhaps foremost were the crimes of violence perpetrated against victims. Prostitutes had been raped, robbed and beaten by "Johns" and "Johns" had been likewise victimized by pimps and prostitutes. The specific act of prostitution itself can be argued to be "victimless".
That argument, however, has far less validity to the individual whom has just had his car or wallet stolen or has been shot, stabbed or beaten. The investigation of these crimes are racked with uncooperative or less than forthright witnesses and victims and a general unwillingness on the part of prosecuting entities to seek serious pursuit of prosecution. Nonetheless they are crimes and an obligation exist (be it moral, ethical or otherwise) to report and investigate the occurrences. Many times the crimes are not reported at all or several days or weeks later, skewing crime statistics and giving an unbalanced picture of, what is in reality, a significant criminal problem. These statistics, as skewed as they are, may be used to justify resource allocation or any number of other purposes.

Secondly, was the negative image the problem portrayed for the city as a whole. Lack of tourism, new business development, interest in re-development and property values are all directly attributable to the all-encompassing perception of safety and well-being or "livability" as held by not only visitors to the area, but by those hving or conducting business in the area. The area had a reputation for, and presented the visual image of "seediness", which helped perpetuate criminal activity while retarding legitimate business opportunities. As previously mentioned, legitimate patronage to the area motels had dropped significantly. For some motels, their sole existence was in providing an environment for criminal activity. Their mere existence, from an economic standpoint, was dependent (or thought to be so) on a certain level of visitation by criminal perpetrators.

Further, the police department was expending already scarce resources, primarily in terms of police officer hours, in handling calls for service in the area. Valuable time was spent dealing with what appeared to be a never ending stream of prostitutes and prostitution related activity. Officers saw little or no results in terms of turning the tide after engaging in sometimes very laborious, repeated tasks of verbal admonishments, field interviews occasional misdemeanor arrests and a litany of report writing. Enforcement efforts declined due to a lack of cause and effect methods and results.
This caused the perception that the police "allowed" prostitutes to operate with impunity, some members of the public suggested that officers were "doing business" with the prostitutes, often because they would see officers engaged in a rather congenial field interview with the prostitute walking off with no obvious or apparent enforcement action taken.

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

In years past, traditional, direct enforcement techniques were the order of the day. When the department was fortunate enough to be able to staff a crime suppression unit (plain clothes street team) it concentrated on conducting sting operations, primarily on prostitutes and occasionally on "Johns". These operations, however, were random and sporadic, with no follow-up effort and no means by which to measure the success other than seeing fewer prostitutes on the street for a few days. Also, the unit had other responsibilities, as it was not designed to be a full time vice unit. Further, staffing such a unit was a luxury not always possible during an era of dwindling resources and department down-sizing. In more recent times, enforcement was left to uniformed patrol officers assigned that particular beat. As mentioned previously, engagement of prostitutes was generally a pedestrian exercise of checking for outstanding warrants and giving a verbal admonishment to leave the area. At times, officers would physically escort groups of prostitutes down the street at the front bumper of a police cruiser until reaching the city limit boundary between National City and San Diego, engaging an "out of sight-out of mind" mentality.

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

Clearly, traditional "arrest and book" techniques alone, under the current conditions, would not bring about the needed long term changes. It was increasing difficult, actually impossible most of the time, to incarcerate on misdemeanor offenses due to jail overcrowding, imposing of booking fees and other reasons.
A misdemeanor cite and release was simply a means by which to document when the offender would fail to appear, and the offender would be back on the street, engaged in prostitution, in a matter of minutes. Therefore, the threat of police contact, or even arrest was not a deterrent to the prostitutes. The inability to conduct regular undercover type stings furthered the probability that a prostitute would not be arrested on an actual soliciting charge. "Johns" also knew that based upon the sheer number of motorist in the area, chances of being stopped and identified as a "John" cruising the area was remote. Even if stopped, the worst case scenario usually produced a field interview. Further, information was being provided on the Internet about the area, providing directions including specific off-ramps and the naming the city of National City for those looking for prostitutes. Further, the physical environment had steadily deteriorated, adding to the perception that "nobody cared" and that criminal activity was "expected" to occur there. (Broken Window theory)

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

The information provided by the Crime Analysis unit revealed an even greater amount of calls for service in the target area then generally expected. As an example, The police department handled 538 calls for service at the six motels in the target area from January 1 to December 31, 1996. Perhaps more importantly however, was the information that two of the motels accounted for 67% of those calls and one motel accounted for only 2% of the calls. This allowed us the ability to concentrate specifically on those motels generating the greater numbers, and formulate a plan tailored for that location. Additional information provided the specific nature of the calls for service, total hours spent in response to calls, average time spent per call, etc.

Further, the community survey, as used for analytical purposes, which was conducted at the onset of the project, helped validate our initial hypothesis in that the public also believed that prostitution activity was responsible for the other criminal activity at hand and the general quality of life issues.
8. What situational information was needed to better understand the problem (e.g. time of occurrence, location, other particulars of the environment, etc.)?

See above questions and answers.

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

A series of meetings were held with those parties identified as having some area of responsibility. Again, a community survey was conducted with businesses and residents in the target area. A meeting was also held with the motel/hotel owners and managers, seeking their perception of the problem and their input on possible solutions. Additionally, we provided an outline of our planned response and identified specific areas of responsibility concerning the hotel/motels. Further, a meeting of all city department directors (or their representative) was held at the onset of the project. Much like the meeting with the responsibles from the hotels/motels, we provided statistical data which helped identify the problem, provided an outline of our planned response and sought input on solutions and identified areas of responsibility.

C. Response:

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

Of the possible response alternatives that were discussed and proposed, but ultimately not utilized, included: Having the U.S. Navy declare the target area "off-limits" to Navy personnel. This however, would have unfairly penalized those individuals frequenting the area for legitimate reasons and those businesses making an honest effort to correct problems but dependent on Navy personnel for patronage.
Obtaining restraining orders against known and documented prostitutes, restricting their mere presence in the area. Although previously successful in other areas, recent legal wrangling and the voluminous amount of documentation involved proved the tactic to be impractical. The key to all of our response efforts was to remain flexible and be able to change direction and/or focus when results were not favorable.

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

We established a four month time line from inception to completion (Jan 2 through May 1, 1997) and divided areas of responsibility into general categories (legal, environmental, etc.) and more specific sub-categories (new ordinances, pay phone removal, lighting, etc.), assigning them to the four team members. Listed below is a synopsized list of our response, in no particular order and a brief explanation when applicable.

1. We partnered with San Diego Gas and Electric via City Public Works Department in correcting deficient lighting in the area. The result was three new street lights and a changing of the existing lights to a higher wattage. Further, SDG&E modified power utility boxes in the area, preventing the use of them as benches or leaning rails.

2. Cal-Trans (State Highway Dept.) installed slats in the fence between the freeway and Roosevelt Ave. obscuring the view from would be "Johns" on the freeway to prostitutes along Roosevelt Ave. and vise versa. Prior, "Johns" would slow down along the freeway, make eye contact and engage in hand signals with prostitutes, picking out their date before ever leaving the freeway. Further, an unobstructed view allowed "Johns" to observe the area for police activity before committing themselves to the area. Cal Trans is currently in the process of planting vegetation to aid in the visual obscurement.

3. Working with business owners in the area and the San Diego County pay phone owners Assoc, along with individual pay phone owners,
we removed four pay phones used most often by prostitutes and pimps. Further, we mechanically restricted the use of other pay phones in the target area.

4. With the help and support of the City Attorney's Office, we drafted a city ordinance which requires hotel/motel operators to obtain valid picture identification and record such information of all hotel/motel guests. Analysis had shown that few prostitutes carry valid I.D. and "Johns" are reluctant to use their real name and address. The city council adopted the ordinance which is now law.

5. Again, with the help and support of the City Attorney's Office, we drafted an ordinance enabling the City to utilize California Vehicle Code 22659.5, allowing vehicles used in the commission of an act of prostitution to be declared a public nuisances and impounded. This is particularly useful in combating "Johns" who are repeat offenders and pimps.

6. We were successful in receiving a deputy district attorney assigned specifically to the team for the duration of the project. This prosecutor was personally responsible for the handling of all arrests submitted for prosecution. This allowed personal attention to be given to all cases by someone familiar with the goals and objectives of the project. The prosecutor was an integral part of the project, present during many of the phases of the operation.

7. We conducted 17 sting operations on prostitutes and "Johns" and made 172 arrests for prostitution and prostitution related activity. During the operations, we concentrated on disrupting the offenders economically. We seized money, condoms and pagers and towed vehicles from offenders whenever possible. We used officers from other agencies to pose as decoy prostitutes and encouraged others to visit the project.

8. We ignored the geographical boundary separating National City from San Diego and frequently made arrests in San Diego of prostitutes known to work in National City.
Prior to this time, prostitutes would simply walk to the other side of the street into San Diego when observing an approaching police officer and return moments later after the officer had left the area. Conversely, when San Diego P.D. Vice was working an operation, prostitutes would flock across the border into National City. Analysis showed that our prostitutes were theirs and vice versa.

9. We petitioned the court to invoke section 13201.5 of the California Vehicle Code, this is a little known and little used section which allows the court to suspend the driving privilege of any person convicted of prostitution when the offense was committed within 1000 feet of a private residence and with the use of a vehicle.

10. We compiled a comprehensive intelligence file of approx. 500 prostitutes and 60 pimps, cross referenced by aliases. The file continues to assist patrol officers in proper identification of suspected offenders.

11. Of the pimps we identified as being on probation or parole, we successfully had their conditions of probation or parole modified, restricting them from the target area. Those who met the criteria were assigned to the J.U.D.G.E. Unit, a county wide, multi-jurisdictional drug-gang enforcement unit, who conducted 4th amendment waiver searches and covert surveillance.

12. We were successful in obtaining a contract with the city of San Diego which enabled us to use city jail for the booking of misdemeanor offenses.

13. We were successful in having a county welfare fraud investigator assigned to the project. Analysis had shown that several of the prostitutes were receiving some type of public assistance and were obviously not claiming their income. Further, many were receiving A.F.D.C. while no longer having custody of their children. Fraud cases were initiated against some violators, but perhaps more effective was the suspension or revocation of financial aid even without a criminal case being filed.
14. We established a liaison with the U.S. Navy and enacted a procedure by which all Navy personnel were immediately turned over to Shore Patrol and returned to their command upon an arrest for any prostitution related offense. We further enacted a procedure where all reports documenting the offense and arrest were automatically sent to the offender's command. Previously The Navy would not necessarily be notified, unless the offender volunteered the information. We also drafted and disseminated a letter via the U.S. Navy Base Safety Committee outlining the dangers and possible repercussions associated with prostitution activity. This letter was sent to all commands on the base.

15. We arranged for a social service counselor to be available during our sting operations in the event a prostitute opted for social service information and/or counseling. Further, we provided a 7 page booklet of social service referral information to each arrested prostitute.

16. We partnered with City Code Compliance and Building and Safety in doing inspections of residences on Roosevelt Ave. of which analysis showed were contributing to the problem. Six of the residences were renovated as a result of the inspections.

17. Finally, we used the media (both print and electronic) to highlight the project, which brought public awareness about the extent of the problem, served as a deterrent to would be "Johns" from entering the area and increased the pressure on prostitutes and pimps in the area. The stories further helped garner public support for the project, resulting in several inquiries from the public as to how they could help in the efforts.

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

Response was tailored by virtue of examining the Crime Analysis Unit data, the community surveys, knowledge and experience of prior enforcement tactics/ results and an assessment of environmental conditions.
4. What evaluation criteria were most important to the department before implementation of the response alternative(s) (e.g. legality, community values, potential effectiveness, cost, practicality, etc.)?

Legality and potential effectiveness were deemed most important.

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

The overall goal was to greatly reduce calls for service and criminal offenses in the target area which were precipitated by prostitution related activity. The objectives were to target prostitutes, pimps and "Johns" as the underlying cause of the problem, manipulate the physical environment to make it less attractive for criminal activity and build a sense of responsibility and ownership of the problem among the businesses and residences in the area.

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

Our resources were limited only by our own imagination, ingenuity and creativity in asking for assistance or employing a new idea or tactic. We relied heavily on outside resources, as our core team was limited to four officers and limited equipment.

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

Refer to "Scanning" and "Analysis" sections.

S. What difficulties were encountered during response implementation?

Difficulties were minimal but included initial reluctance on the part of large companies/ bureaucracies to take ownership of the problem, time delays in terms of seeing the implementation of environmental changes, conflicts with our time line of events versus the reality of policy, procedures and personnel availability from those outside sources we depended on and the general delays within our own organization caused by the "everybody who is anybody needs to put their mark on the paper" mentality.
9. Who was involved in the response to your problem?

See previous questions and answers.

D. Assessment:

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

The results were immediate and dramatic. Roughly one month into the project, arrests had slowed from the usual 7 to 10 a day to 3 to 5 a day. Positive feedback from patrol officers indicated less calls for service and businesses and residents were vocal about the improvements. Prostitutes stated they were leaving the area and not returning. The hotel/motels reported a more favorable clientele. In the three months following completion of the project, calls for service at the six area motels dropped 66.86% compared to the same period the previous year. Prostitutes in the area are now the exception, not the norm. During the last four days of direct enforcement tactics (stings) only two prostitutes were found in the target area.

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

Methods of evaluation consisted of statistics provided by the Crime Analysis Unit regarding calls for service, location, type, etc., personal observations and perceptions of beat officers assigned to the target area, Lack of field interviews/need for enforcement, lack of complaints being directed at city officials and the department by the public, positive feedback by businesses, residents and other city personnel and a follow up story done by the media. The project effectiveness continues to be evaluated and will continue for one year.
3. Who was involved in the evaluation?

   See above.

4. Were there problems in implementing the response plan?

   See question #8 under "RESPONSE".

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

   N/A

6. What response goals were accomplished?

   Assessment analysis indicates all primary response goals were accomplished.

7. How did you measure your results?

   Previously answered.

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

   Perhaps by involving more personnel from within our own department at various levels and drawing upon their areas of knowledge, experience and training to provide potential response tactics. Further, we could have increased our level of communication about the project (stages, successes, changes, etc.) with others in the department.

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

   Displacement was of concern, however, as part of the response plan we regularly monitored those areas considered likely or prone to prostitution activity because of displacement.
At the first hint of increased activity (which was seldom) we countered with zero tolerance direct enforcement tactics, usually extending the scope of one of our sting operations into the possible displacement zone. Further, we utilized a county wide crime information computer to track the movements of our offenders in terms of arrests, cites, F.I.'s, etc., as they appeared in other jurisdictions. We realize that many of our offenders went somewhere, it just wasn't within our city.

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

The initial response plan called for a series of maintenance stings, but only for a limited time. As the long term improvements/changes continue to take hold and patrol officers and others in the department fully embrace and implement P.O.P. techniques, the need for direct involvement by us in terms of maintenance operations will diminish.
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AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

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

The project was developed and executed by the Neighborhood Policing Team, a four member unit consisting of three officers and a sergeant. The team was specifically developed for the purpose of developing and employing problem-oriented policing in the city. (See NPT mission statement) Although the department as a whole subscribes to the general theory of problem-oriented policing and has been practicing the concepts, in part, on a limited basis for several years, full implementation and recognition department wide has not yet occurred.

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

The Neighborhood Policing Team members have varying degrees of experience in problem-oriented policing. Just prior to the beginning of this project, team members had attended the annual POP conference in San Diego.

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

No.
4. What resources and guidelines (manuals, past problem solving examples, etc.) were used, if any, by police officers to help them manage this problem solving initiative?

As a member of the original COP/POP department transition team of several years ago, Sgt. Roark had an assortment information made available to the team. Further, team members gathered a significant amount of ideas at the POP conference and drew upon their past experience of limited POP practice while serving in patrol.

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

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

There was very little infrastructure in place regarding the Neighborhood Policing Team prior to the start of this project (the team was just a month old). We literally begged and borrowed everything from general office equipment to vehicles to furniture and everything in between. We were successful in taping about $1,500.00 in asset seizure money to refurbish two 13 year old Dodge Ramchargers, which are the Neighborhood Policing Team's primary vehicles.

7. Project Contact Person:

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Calls for Service (by Hotel/Motel) 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel</th>
<th>Calls</th>
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<td>Colony Inn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holiday Inn</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>National City Motel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radisson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stagecoach Budget Inn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value Inn</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Calls for Service</strong></td>
<td><strong>503</strong></td>
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Calls for Service in 1996 (by Hotel/Motel)

- Value Inn 37%
- Colony Inn 13%
- Holiday Inn 14%
- National City Motel 2%
- Stagecoach Budget Inn 25%
- Radisson 9%
Calls for Service Comparison  
NPT Target Area Hotels  
(NC Motel, Budget, Colony, Value, Radisson, Holiday Inn)  
May, June and July* 1996 and 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Total CFS</td>
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Decrease from 1996 to 1997

-66.85%