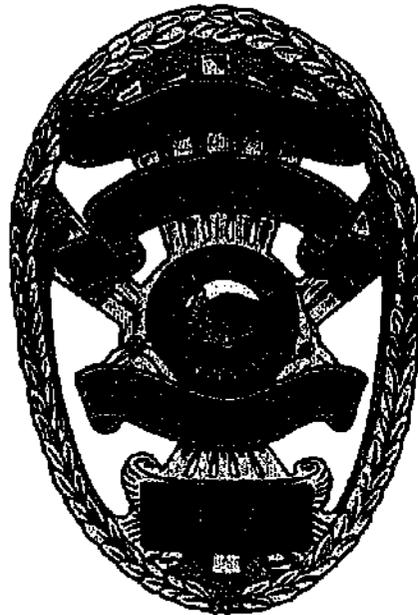


# MAIN STREET CRIME WATCH PROJECT

*"ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR A LONGMONT PASTIME*



CITY OF LONGMONT POLICE DEPARTMENT  
LONGMONT, COLORADO

**CHIEF EXECUTIVES  
NOMINATION LETTER**

**LONGMONT  
POLICE  
DEPARTMENT**

# LONGMONT POLICE DEPARTMENT

225 Kimbark Street • Longmont • Colorado • 80501



May 12, 2000

Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee  
Police Executive Research Forum  
1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 930  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Committee Members:

It is my pleasure to nominate the Main Street Crime Watch Project for the 2000 Herman Goldstein Award. This comprehensive project truly embraced all aspects of the Problem Oriented Policing approach. The Main Street Project was a grass roots effort by citizens, businesses, and line level police officers, who grouped together using the SARA model to address a perennial cruising problem in the city of Longmont.

The responses this group eventually employed included measures to protect business interests, safeguard neighborhoods, mobilize officers, and yet still allow cruisers to engage in a recreational activity important to them. Their plan embraced community involvement and emphasized positive approaches in reducing criminal activities associated with cruising. The operational plan initiated in this project utilized community action, education, open communication, partnerships, beat ownership, leadership, and good old fashion policing in a multi-faceted attack on the problem.

I believe this project serves as an outstanding example of Problem Oriented Policing for other agencies that may be struggling with cruising issues in their communities. I urge you to review this project and consider it for this prestigious award.

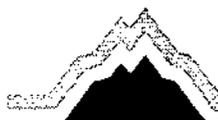
Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Earhart", is written over a white background.

Commander Craig A. Earhart  
Acting Chief of Police

*"Policing in Partnership -with the People "*

PHONE: (303) 651-8555 ♦ METRO: (303) 466-1906 • FAX: Admin/Inv - (303) 651-8651; Records - (303) 651-8752



# SUMMARY

# MAIN STREET CRIME WATCH PROJECT

## "Alternative Solutions for a Longmont Pastime"

### Summary

Main Street Crime Watch Project is based on problems identified by line level officers and community members. It initiated to reduce the level of impact cruising activity was having on businesses, surrounding neighborhoods, and the availability of officers to respond to other calls for service with the community.

### Scanning

- Business lots along Main Street fill up with people who were not customers.
- Vandalism increased to the businesses.
- Crowds were leaving volumes of litter.
- Fights were escalating and involved weapons.
- Traffic complaints increasing.
- Noise from the heavy volume of vehicles cruising was impacting residential areas.

### Analysis

- A high percentage of those contacted for violations were not Longmont residents.
- Officers were spending increased amounts of time responding to and investigating crimes occurring in this area.
- Assaults, property crimes and the amount of the damage involved were increasing.
- Cruising is part of Longmont's history and has become part of its culture.
- Past efforts were department based and did not involve community input.
- Community meetings were held to hear the business leaders and neighborhood concerns and ideas.
- Partnerships were developed.

### The Response

- Information from the community and department meetings utilized to established this goal:  
  
*"To increase safety on the Main Street corridor and reduce the opportunity for crime to occur, using effective partnerships, with education, behavior modification, and strict enforcement actions, while not adversely affecting area businesses or members of the community."*
- A multi phase Operations Plan was developed and approved at the Department wide level.
- Plan implemented in stages, initially meeting education and partnership goals.  
Businesses cooperated by making necessary changes.  
Enforcement action was then increased.  
Monitored for displacement

### **The Assessment**

- Summonses and arrests initially climbed but then reduced.
- More than 50% of those contacted were not Longmont residents.
- Assaults, criminal mischief, and amount of litter reduced.
- Crowds were eliminated from the business parking lots.
- Zero residential complaints regarding noise from Main Street.
- Beat ownership by officers increased, but time spent in a reactive mode was reduced.
- Cruising continues, but in a safer environment.

# AWARD NOMINATION

MAIN STREET CRIME WATCH-1 PROJECT

"ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR A LONGMONT PASTIME

**MAIN STREET CRIME WATCH PROJECT**  
**"Alternative Solutions for a Longmont Pastime"**  
**Herman Goldstein Award Nomination**

**DESCRIPTION**

Longmont, Colorado is a city of approximately 65,000 located just north of the Denver metropolitan area with several smaller rural communities spreading out along the Front Range. Longmont has Hwy 287, Main Street, which is a four-lane roadway running north south through the center of the city. Cruising developed along this street in the 1960's, increased to a point in the 1970's where it was labeled by a national magazine as one of the ten best cruising locations in the country. Longmont still draws large numbers of people from beyond the Denver metropolitan area and the surrounding rural communities to "Cruise Main" on Friday and Saturday nights after dark.

**SCANNING**

In 1998, citizens, businesses, and officers all noted increases in the volume of traffic, calls for service, quality of life concerns and the level of the violence that was occurring along the Main Street corridor. This area encompasses two geographic police beats, Downtown and Horizon, and runs just over 2.5 miles from the center of the city to the northern most city limits. The beats are predominately commercially zoned, with some scattered residential rental properties mixed in the older sections of the city. The commercial zones are narrow, mostly one block east and west of Main Street and are bordered by established residential neighborhoods, which include some retirement communities. The problems seemed to be affecting the quality of life in each of these areas.

Officers began to review changes they were seeing and the effort it was taking on their part to respond to and resolve many of these crimes. Statistics detailed from 1997 and 1998 an increase in disturbances, assaults, criminal mischief's, and traffic problems, liquor law violations, shoplifting, littering, narcotic violations and crowd dispersals. Individuals involved in the disturbances and

assaults seemed to be resorting to weapons more frequently.

During the same time period, residents were complaining of the noise coming from the vehicles and their car stereos as they drove up and down that 2.5-mile section of Main Street, which was known as "The Strip." Homeowners were being impacted as far as three and four blocks to the east and west of the Main Street corridor.

Businesses located at the north end of Main Street, where cruisers used the large parking lots of a strip mall to turn around, were noting their lots were packed with people who were not customers of the businesses. The people, identified as "cruisers", were just parking in the lots, standing outside of their vehicles and talking. Cruisers were also stopping on the streets of the old downtown business district, legally parking and then standing in the streets as other cruisers used these streets to complete the south leg of the cruising rotation.

Businesses in both the north and south ends of Main Street reported their buildings were being damaged more frequently and the level of the damage was becoming extensive and costly. Grocery and convenience stores open for business were finding increased damage to their merchandise and restrooms. The convenience stores began closing their restrooms after 2100 hours on Friday and Saturday nights to protect their property. This response increased the public disorder crimes, with people relieving themselves in the parking lots and around area buildings. The businesses also noted large amounts of litter being left in the parking lots. This detracted from the business's appearance and the neighborhoods in the immediate area.

### **ANALYSIS**

Officer Robert Dixon interviewed his beat partners to confirm they were experiencing the same

concerns. He conducted a thorough review of the statistics from 1997 and 1998, with the assistance of the department's Crime Information Research Analyst, the Records Section, and Crime Analyst to compile a complete report. Officer Dixon presented his findings and the increase in problems to his supervisor, requesting additional assistance to resolve the Main Street issues. The information was reviewed and with additional beat officer's assistance, the report was presented to the Crime Watch Committee'. The Crime Watch Committee agreed that this problem needed attention due to the increasing level of activity, the identifiable geographical area effected, the long history of problems associated with cruising that has not been abated, and the ability for the problem to be addressed using the department's beat system. The Committee made assignments to move the Main Street Cruising project forward at the department level, operating from the Patrol Services Division with the beat teams. The Community Services Division and Detective Division were tasked to support the project within their fields of expertise.

The beat teams, comprised of ten officers and two sergeants, began an in depth analysis of all the issues surrounding cruising. Initial meetings utilized the information collected by Officer Dixon. Officers also researched the department's response over the last twenty years to determine the effectiveness of different responses implemented throughout the years. A national search was conducted to find other department strategies cruising abatement and for reducing problems surrounding cruising. The Community Services Division with the beat teams, organized community forums for business owners and citizens who were impacted by the cruising issues. The forums provided an opportunity to gather community members perspectives of the problems and possible solutions. Throughout these forums members were encouraged to use innovative thinking and

<sup>1</sup> This Committee comprises members of the department's executive staff, representatives of key divisions in the agency, and the Chief of Police.

problem solving. Additional departmental work sessions were conducted to review the information collected.

During the community forums officers presented information they had gathered and requested community members input on problems of concern. The overriding complaint from residents living close to Main Street, was the noise level from car stereos, loud mufflers, speed contests, and the littering. Many citizens reported the inability to tolerate the noise level during the summer months. Some found the noise disrupted their sleeping patterns.

Businesses were concerned with damage to their property. The littering and volume of cruisers in private parking lots, created an intimidation factor for legitimate customers who refrained from utilizing the businesses. Businesses in the strip mall at the north end of the corridor, reported the stream of traffic turning around in their parking lot was inhibiting access to their business for customers and employees who were attempting to make deliveries. A few businesses reported their staff was concerned for their safety when they left the business after closing. Often, their staff comprised mostly of female employees, left work facing large groups of people congregated in the parking lot.

Business owners and citizens present indicated they liked individual interaction with the beat officers. Such interaction allowed for consistency, understanding, and added comfort when dealing with issues or complaints. Through these forums many of the businesses agreed to post their parking lots with signage to meet guidelines established to prosecute suspects for trespassing in their parking lots. Other businesses agreed to take additional measures to work with the

department to resolve issues to include installing or repairing lights, gating exits, and installing barriers. One group of citizens took the responsibility for barricading a street at the edge of the south business district to keep cruisers from entering their neighborhood as they made the turn around on the south end of the strip.

Officers at these meetings reported they recognized the problems the citizens were reporting. They also reaffirmed that they were spending more and more time reacting to calls on the Main Street corridor, due to cruising activity. In addition to the increased calls, officers were also responding to calls where the level of violence had increased. Instead of two men engaging in a traditional fist to cuffs type fight, knives and bats were now involved. Crowds from 15 to 40 people were often involved in these incidents, and when contacted as a witness, victim, or suspect they were in an agitated state. The task of investigating such incidents was very time consuming and would require five to six officers to work the incident. Often, this left only three or four officers responding to the remaining calls for service for the rest of the city. Problems and complaints from aggressive driving along Main Street were also increasing.

Another problem identified, was many people contacted were not local citizens. Officers were frequently contacting people from Denver, Fort Collins, small towns over 60 miles away, and from Wyoming. The cruiser's age range varied from early teen's into mid thirty's, however the majority of those contacted were 17-25 years of age.

The consensus of groups attending the Main Street Cruising meetings, was that cruising was a social event, where young men and young women came to interact with each other. Others came to display their vehicles and participate in the nostalgia of cruising. Many in attendance also

reported they or members of their families had "cruised" Main Street in the past thirty years. They noted the problems the community was now facing were different and more severe than when they were participating in cruising.

Cruising is now a year round event. Inclement weather reduces the number of persons involved, but even the harshest of winter weekend nights, young men and women are found standing in the lots and driving up and down Main Street. It is no longer just a summertime event. As the weather improves, so do the volume of cruisers and the number of problems, with April, May, June, July, August, September, and October having the most activity.

Officers felt the Prosecuting Attorney had taken a fairly restrictive approach to enforcing trespassing violations in the parking lots, which had already been posted for no trespassing. Officers believed under the current guidelines issued by the Prosecutor they could not enforce the trespassing violations they observed. This issue was later addressed in a joint meeting with City Attorney, City Prosecutor, and the beat sergeants, and the review of procedures clarified the Prosecutor's position. This information was shared with the officers and allowed for easier enforcement of the ordinances by the officers.

During the review of the responses to cruising conducted by the Longmont Police Department from the last 20 years, it was discovered that in the past the Municipal Court Judge had added an additional surcharge onto fines for violations that occurred along the Main Street corridor. Beat sergeants met with the Municipal Court and the surcharge was reinstated.

Tactics such as saturation patrols using off duty officers and Plain Clothes Operations were

attempted but they did not have the necessary deterring effect. An effective means for reducing some cruising problems was the use of a technique identified as channeling. One lane of Main Street was closed off in each direction north and south bound for several blocks forcing traffic to flow in a single lane. Officers were stationed in each block to monitor traffic flow and identify violations. Violators were contacted and issued summonses for their violations. This inhibited conversations, racing, and the typical antagonizing which was prevalent. Channeling was a very labor intensive and costly, but problems were reduced. A review found that the officers who worked Main Street operations in the past, were usually off duty personnel, working an overtime assignment, and had no "buy in" to resolving the problem. There was never a consistent effort from a core group of people to resolve the Main Street issue. Each officer has their own take on what needed to be done, how much effort they wanted to put forth, and there was not a uniform approach to correcting the problems.

The officers and community members at the meetings all found that the efforts in the past had been valid, but had not been sustained. Once the problem was reduced or another issue presented itself, the focus shifted from the cruising problem to the new issue, until the cruising issue again became a significant problem. The review of the plans from other communities where cruising had been abated, found that a sustained effort to reduce the problems associated with cruising had to be maintained for at least three years if not longer. After that period of time the cruising seemed to stop and not return.

The beat officers now shared a vested interest in the program, as they wanted to succeed. They were participating in developing the plan, partnering with the community, and held accountable through the Crime Watch Process, such ownership had never occurred before. The citizens and

officers developed this goal to guide them as they tried to resolve the issues surrounding cruising:

**"To increase safety on the *Main Street corridor* and reduce the opportunity for *crime to occur, using effective partnerships with education, behavior modification, and strict enforcement actions, while not adversely affecting area businesses or members of the community.*"**

Officers in the past also spent time trying to gain voluntary compliance from the "cruisers" to reduce the litter problems and other issues surrounding the behavior in the parking lots. Responses of this manner were not effective, as the cruising population is constantly different. Voluntary compliance was the ultimate goal and it was determined that education would help to bring many people into compliance. The focus groups addressed ways to reach the people who are involved, specifically since many were coming from so many different communities outside of Longmont.

The focus groups found that people do remember summonses and the impact they have on their finances and driving record. Eight violations were identified that directly related to the cruising problems:

- Trespassing on private parking lots
- Littering
- Exhibition of speed/speed contests
- Impeding traffic
- Noise violations from stereos & mufflers
- Alcohol violations
- Narcotics violations
- Curfew

The eight violations were to be uniformly enforced with a zero tolerance approach by all officers in

the department.

One other concern addressed from the officers, was "burn out". There needed to be a sustained effort to presently reduce the problems associated with cruising so that officers and the community were not continuously dealing with the same issues year after year.

### **RESPONSE**

The two beat sergeants took the information gathered from the community and department meetings and developed an operations plan. Rough drafts were submitted to the beat officers for their review and additional input. The information was compiled into a final draft and presented to the Crime Watch Committee for review and any additional recommendations. This presentation had over twenty-five members of the department present to review the plan. After presentation to the Crime Watch Committee some additions were made in the Enforcement Phase. The plan was then adopted by the Crime Watch Committee and directed that it be implemented as the 1999 Main Street Operations Plan.

With implementation of the Main Street Operations Plan, the ten beat officers were assigned small geographic sections of Main Street to contact the managers or owners of each business and have them fill out contact information sheets and confirm that they did not want people on their property after hours. At the same time they were continuing the partnership building between officers and members of the community. The Community Services Division established a mailing list of all the businesses in the corridor. The beat sergeants and the Community Services Division created a newsletter titled the "Main Street Beat", and circulated it to over 300 identified businesses, keeping them updated on issues within the Downtown and Horizon Beats. (See Appendix A)

A flyer was developed for distribution directly to cruisers on Main Street. The flyer was on red 8 x 11 paper with bold black printing. (See Appendix B) The flyer outlined the partnership that the Police Department had with the community and notifying the cruisers of the zero tolerance approach that was going into effect, what the police department would be doing, and what were acceptable behaviors. These were distributed in mass by officers, cadets and interns to cruisers on two separate weekends in March 1999.

Press releases were distributed to over 17 school and community newspapers in the region with the same information. The local community newspaper ran a series headline articles outlining the problems, community concerns, interviews with some of the "cruisers" and what action would be occurring over the next several weeks. (See Appendix C) The Main Street Operations Plan was featured on a local cable program with interviews of the Beat sergeants detailing the problems associated with the cruising and the how the Main Street Operations Plan was being implemented.

The City of Longmont employee newsletter, featured articles raising awareness of the plan and an insert was placed in all city utility bills outlining the plan for the citizens of the community. Longmont Emergency Communications Center was briefed on the additional activity that would be occurring so that they were prepared to assist with additional radio channels. Surrounding law enforcement and emergency service agencies were also briefed on the plan.

To effect channeling operations over 400 traffic cones and additional barricades and signs were purchased. The purchases were funded by a grant. Another grant funded two portable breath-testing devices to assist with enforcement of alcohol violations.

Horizon and Downtown Beat officers adjusted their schedules so that they would be available to work primarily on the Main Street corridor. Off duty officers were assigned to cover calls in other beats so the Main Street beat officers would not be pulled away. Beat officers remained in the two beats focusing on Problem Orientated Policing efforts to resolve the issues surrounding cruising. They continued to hand out the warning flyers. In addition, they identified violations, explained why these efforts were necessary, issued summonses, and made appropriate arrests. The officers were highly visible and worked to ensure their presence and actions were observed by those cruising the Main Street corridor.

The Police Department's bicycle officers were also brought in for enforcement operations along the Main Street corridor. This was a key point of the second phase of the plan and was carried through the summer and fall months. The bicycle officers moved easily up and down Main Street through the traffic, identified violators, and contacted the driver's in the congested traffic. Also, they were able to move into the parking lots and observe violations in progress that were often concealed from officers in patrol cars.

### **ASSESSMENT**

Assessment was established as being an integral part of the plan and began during Phase I. The Crime Watch Committee gave beat sergeants the authority to adapt the plan as needed to make it more effective. Results needed to be available for them to make these decisions. The beat sergeants and the Crime Analyst collected data on arrests and on all summonses and written warnings issued along the Main Street corridor each weekend. The beat sergeants and their teams made nightly assessments of traffic flow, obvious behavior modifications, and displacements of the

problems, which then resolved.

The beat sergeants then used the data to add or reduce additional resources, reallocate personnel and institute the channeling operations, and to more effectively work on problem solving. The channeling operations were later then reviewed for effectiveness and found that beat and bike patrol officers had been just as effective, but less costly.

Two formal reports were presented back to the Crime Watch Committee updating department personnel regarding the impact of the Main Street Operations project. Summonses and arrests increased, but later lowered in the last quarter of 1999. Officers issued 826 summonses, 211 written warnings, and made 171 arrests during Main Street Operations. In 1999 over 50% of those contacted and issued summonses, were not Longmont residents. Of those who were arrested more than 50% were Longmont residents. Our analysis could not identify why these two statistics had opposite results. It was noted that repeat offenders who had been involved in a significant amount of the criminal activity in 1998 along the Main Street corridor were not contacted again after their initial contacts once the Operation Plan was initiated.

The beat sergeants also found overtime and bike patrol officers were no longer needed to control the problems. Beat officers worked on maintenance of the issues, but were able to respond to other calls for service in the city. Beat officers to date, have continued the maintenance phase of the operation, even after the return of unseasonably warm weather

There were zero citizen complaints from residents regarding noise from Main Street after the plan was implemented. Businesses reported their employees felt safer when they left the businesses

at night. Parking lots on the north section of Main Street had significant less litter and legitimate customers could access the businesses without navigating through crowds of young adults.

A review of the 1998 and 1999 statistics found the calls from businesses requesting Crowd Dispersals dropped by 66%. (See Appendix C) Property Crimes were reduced by 40% and Disorder Crimes were reduced by 11%. (See Appendix D) Officers observed disturbances and assaults involving weapons reduced to a very minute number. The disturbances or assaults that did occur involved two to five people and were easily dealt with by the responding officers. The number of driving complaints occurring during cruising hours were also reduced by 38%.

Part of the Main Street Operations Plan dealt with monitoring for displacement. Contingency plans were in place to deal with displacement. When displacement had been located, beat teams resolved the issues, except for one area in Longmont; a large public parking lot at the back of several businesses located at the south end of the Main Street turn around area. Cruisers discovered they could legally park here and on the streets around this parking area. They congregated in the area, loitering and interacting with the other cruisers who drive by. As a result, the area was plagued with littering, driving and noise complaints.

A community development group manages the area, recognized the problem and were receptive to the Police Department's concerns. They were reluctant to take action to post trespassing signs, even though the lot is not used by the businesses after 1700 hours, due to the fear of making a negative statement about the area. They hesitated to officially acknowledge a problem existed. Assessment continues in this area and the department is continuing to work with this development group to find a resolution to the displacement problem.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Cruising does continue, but in a much safer and positive environment. Beat sergeants continue to monitor the area and work with the beat teams on maintenance issues for both beats. A 2000 Main Street Operations Plan has been drafted, yet problems have not risen to the level that additional resources have been needed. The "Main Street Beat" is still being published and articles continue to appear in the local newspaper.

The Police Department did accomplish the goal for Main Street Operations:

***"To increase safety on the Main Street corridor and reduce the opportunity for crime to occur, using effective partnerships with education, behavior modification, and strict enforcement actions, while not adversely affecting area businesses or members of the community."***

## AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

This program was adopted by the department, and was endorsed by the City Manager. The beat sergeants from the Patrol Services Division managed the program. Both sergeants have attended Problem Orientated Policing and Community Orientated Policing training. Both were promoted under a promotion system that had emphasized these areas within the process. A majority of the officers involved had been through Community Orientated Policing and Problem Orientated Policing training, with many of them being hired under the current system that is encouraging this style of policing. Some have also attended the P.O.P. Conference in San Diego, CA.

The Longmont Police Department had been actively involved in Community Orientated Policing at all levels for the past seven years. The officers, supervisors, and the community now operate knowing this system is available and have numerous successful examples to model. This was by

far the most comprehensive, long term and covered the most geographical area of any project the department has attempted so far. This project involved citizens, businesses, and officers working together to identify the problem, responses, and then jointly assessing the project as it progressed. There were no direct compensation provided to the officers. They put forth this extra effort with the intent of making a difference, improving the conditions, and changing the behaviors of the cruisers in a positive direction.

The beat sergeants and officers dedicated over 500 man-hours in preparation, development and community meetings prior to the implementation of the plan. There was a \$15,000 overtime expenditure for additional staffing to facilitate the second phase of the Operations Plan. \$2,700 in grant money was obtained for equipment purchases and leases. The overtime expenditure and the amount of time required to conduct the assessments with the supporting documentation were the biggest obstacles that were presented during the project.

Contact person:

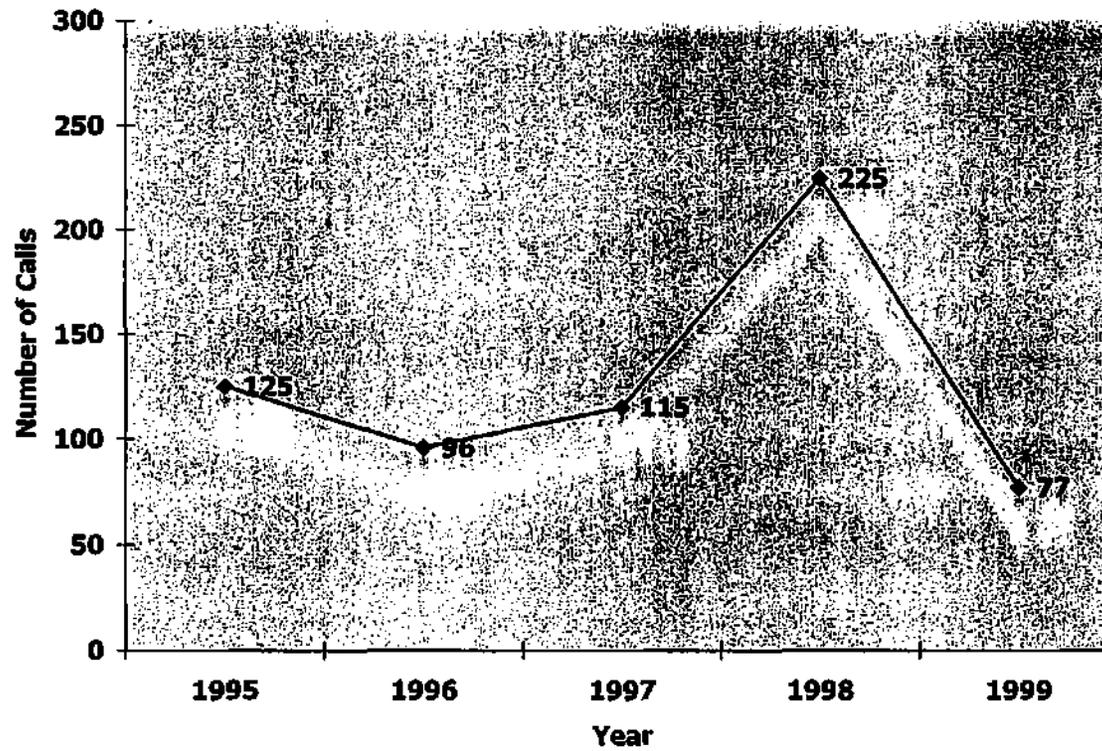
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# Appendix D

CROWD DISPERSAL FIVE YEAR COMPARISON

### Main Street Crime Watch Project Crowd Dispersal Calls for Service



# Appendix E

MAIN STREET CRIME WATCHli COMPARISON  
(COMPARISON of 1 998 vs. 1 999 CALL Types)

Main Street Crime Watch Comparison			
	1998	1999	Percent Change
<b>Property Crimes</b>			
Auto Theft	6	1	
Burglary	3	2	
Car Prowl	0	0	
Crimes to Vehicle	7	2	
Criminal Mischief	2	0	
Criminal Trespass	5	8	
Malicious Mischief	6	5	
Theft	30	18	
Vandalism	1	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>-40</b>
<b>Crowd Dispersals</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>-66</b>
<b>Driving Complaints</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>-38</b>
<b>Disorder Crimes</b>			
Disturbance	56	56	
Drunk Parties	21	19	
Intoxication	6	2	
Juvenile Problem	14	14	
Loud Music	15	5	
Loud Party	8	7	
Neighbor Problem	0	1	
Noise Complaint	2	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>-11</b>