

Street Crimes Unit Project



REDUCING PROSTITUTION' AND VICE RELATED) CRIMES
IN CENTRAL SECTOR_
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The City of Orlando is one of the fastest growing cities in America, and presently encompasses over 105 square miles of prime residential and commercial property. The City is home for the NBA's Orlando Magic basketball team, Universal Studios of Florida, and the Orlando International airport. The City plays host to millions of visitors who come to enjoy the area's sunny climate and numerous attractions, which include Walt Disney World and Sea World.

The Orlando Police Department is a professional law enforcement organization accredited by the Florida Commission on Law Enforcement Accreditation. The Department has an authorized strength of 678 sworn officers and 280 civilian support staff members. The City of Orlando is divided into five sectors that include the Southeast Sector, Northwest Sector, Northeast Sector, Southwest Sector and the Central Sector. The Central Sector encompasses approximately three square miles of residential and commercial property. Two major streets or thoroughfares traverse this area of town. It is heavily congested with pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The T. D. Waterhouse Arena, home of the Orlando Magic, and the Florida Citrus Bowl are located in this neighborhood. Traditionally, this area has been plagued with prostitution and vice related crimes. Residents, citizens, police officers, business owners and local leaders in the community were consistently reporting the prostitution problem. Their concerns focused on the increase of prostitution and vice related crimes in the area during the early morning and evening hours. The "Johns" were parking in the driveways of businesses and using private property for illegal activity. The problem was reducing the quality of life in the neighborhood.

The Street Crimes Unit was formed on November 29, 1999 to proactively enforce vice and drug laws in the City of Orlando. The Unit is comprised of one sergeant, four detectives and two

rotating officer positions from Uniform Patrol. They work 10-hour days during the week, often flexing their hours to parallel the crime trends in the community.

The methods used to analyze the problem were direct observations, use of the Crime Analysis Unit to obtain data relative to calls for service, field interview reports, self initiated activity and arrests in the designated area.

The problem was identified by the residents who lived and worked in the community as well as by the patrol officers who were responding to calls for service. Prostitution was attracting an unsavory level of individuals to the neighborhood and, on several occasions, local youth and business people found used condoms and drug paraphernalia on their property. Members of the Street Crimes Unit were able to meet with the residents and identify the causes of crime and priorities in the community. The residents had a fear of walking in the neighborhood and being subjected to the criminal element on a daily basis. There was a fear for the children in the neighborhood. This area has been plagued by prostitution and vice related activity for possibly the past five years.

Criminal activity in the neighborhood was on the increase to a level that the entire neighborhood was deteriorating. Business owners were complaining that commercial activity was becoming difficult to maintain since prostitutes were "soliciting" near their businesses. Residents were complaining to the police that they were becoming overwhelmed with the feeling of despair. Residual crimes such as drug dealing, robberies, burglaries, auto-thefts and drug dealing were all combining to instill a feeling of hopelessness in the community.

Traditional methods of resolving the problem in the community proved to be situational at best. Police conducted decoy operations in an attempt to arrest the offenders. The problem was deeply rooted in the community. The offenders lived in the neighborhood and more often than not returned to the livelihood they knew best. This community had an unsavory reputation and it was well known that prostitutes frequented this area. The Central Sector was known as a haven for prostitutes where anyone could come and engage in illegal activity.

The response plan involved a multi-pronged strategy in order to impact and reduce the prostitution complaints. We attempted to target those most affected by the problem. In other words, what area of town was being affected and why was this problem affecting this particular part of the city? We also attempted to educate the community by mobilizing them to be a "partner" in the crime reduction efforts. We wanted the residents to be involved in the reporting phase.

The goal of the project was to (1) significantly impact or reduce vice crimes in the affected areas (2) to involve the residents and business owners in the problem solving process, (3) restore hope and faith in the residents., (4) target landlords and homeowners who refused to comply with health and building violations and to (5) build partnerships with other police agencies to address the same crimes in the surrounding areas.

In the first year, a "prostitution free zone" was created and an anonymous "vice" tip line was implemented to open direct lines of communication with business and residential areas chronically plagued with vice and drug-related crimes. A specific geographic area along two major highways was identified and labeled a "prostitution free zone." Persons arrested and

convicted of prostitution are sentenced to either jail or the maximum allowable probation, with a special condition of probation. This includes the condition that the arrestee is prohibited from returning to the specified zone. If the probationer returns to the zone within the specified time period, that person is subject to immediate arrest for Violation of Probation.

The Street Crimes Unit implemented an anonymous tip line **(407-423-VICE)** to assist citizens in reporting vice violations. The members of the Unit distribute the telephone number during their attendance at neighborhood and business meetings. Citizens can call to report illegal activity in a specific area. This enables the SCU to routinely adjust their days and hours of operation to address these concerns. (See Attachment A).

The Street Crimes Unit was able to establish two additional initiatives to assist them in combating vice-related activity in the community. The creation of a city "Busted" web-site **(www.citvoforlando.net/police/vice-busted.htm)** to post pictures of those arrested for drugs, prostitution and lewd acts has proven to be a valuable tool in reducing crime. People in the community can access this website and view the arrests in their area. This not only informs the citizens that the area is being actively worked, but also affords them the ability to notify the SCU when a repeat offender returns to their neighborhood. (See Attachments B & C).

The business and neighborhood leaders also have a direct link of communication with the supervisor of the Street Crimes Unit through the creation of an e-mail address **(OPDVICESGT(a~YAHOO.COM))** to report illegal activity. (See Attachment A).

The police department also scheduled meetings with other city departments to obtain their support in assisting the residents of the community. We were requesting that these departments

increase their oversight and civil enforcement in the Central Sector to assist in policing the neighborhood. The Nuisance Abatement Board, Code Enforcement, and the Neighborhood Homeowners Association worked in conjunction with the Orlando Police Department to resolve the issues and revitalize the community.

The Nuisance Abatement Board was established by City Ordinance to hear complaints regarding drug-related or Prostitution-related public nuisances and youth and street gang activity. The board consists of five members from the community appointed by the Mayor. In March 1999, the Ordinance was amended to grant the Board the power to levy fines. The Commander of the Drug Enforcement Division is responsible for the administration of the Nuisance Abatement Ordinance. The Commander is responsible for sending out notices to property owners whose property has been the site of unlawful sale or delivery of controlled substances; or on one occasion as the site of the unlawful possession of a controlled substance, where such possession constitutes a felony and that has been previously used on more than one occasion as the site of the unlawful sale, delivery, manufacture, or cultivation of any controlled substance; or used as the site of a violation of section 796.07 Fla Stat. (dealing with prostitution), or used by a youth or street gang for the purpose of conducting a pattern of youth or gang activity. The notice shall contain the following information:

1. A description of the activity, location and names of the persons involved.
2. The Orlando Police Department complaint case number.
3. A request that the property owner or landlord respond to the Commander detailing what, if any, actions he/she has taken to resolve the problem or remove the offending tenant and/or the persons involved.

The Nuisance Abatement Board has proven to be a very effective tool in the fight against prostitution and drug dealing in the Central Sector. The NAB compels landlords to improve vacant properties used for prostitution or illegal activity. Code Enforcement is also working with law enforcement and has taken the same approach in citing owners who permit the use of their property for illegal purposes.

The Neighborhood Homeowners Association has established meetings in the community to solicit input and concerns from the residents. Street Crime Unit detectives also attend these meetings and receive the information first hand in order to address the complaints. Once the initiatives were implemented, the residents and business owners provided input to the Street Crimes Unit whenever criminal activity was present in the affected areas. The citizens have been able to access the "Busted" website and e-mail address to report criminal activity.

The Street Crimes Unit has been very successful in their efforts to impact prostitution and drug related activity in the community. The following results demonstrate a significant decrease in prostitution activity. When comparing the unit's first year's statistics (**11129199-12105100**) with **the** unit's second year's statistics (**12106100 -12101101**), almost all categories showed a decrease. A total of 515 people were arrested (25% decrease). 130 males were arrested for prostitution (24% decrease) while 256 females were arrested for prostitution (29% decrease). Three people were arrested for "pimping" (66% decrease). Also, 51 males were arrested for lewd acts in the City (37% decrease). Additionally, 41 arrestees were charged with misdemeanor drugs (37% decrease). The only increase was in felony drug arrests where 57 were charged with felony drugs (13% increase). This can be explained in that 49 arrests were made for Sale and Delivery

of a Controlled Substance (13% increase). (See Attachment D.) Due to the decrease in prostitution activity, the undercover detectives had more time to commit to making undercover drug purchases.

Comparison Result Table

	11/29/99 - 12/05/00	12/06/00 -12101101	Increase/Decrease
Total Arrests	682	515	25% ↓
Male Prostitute Arrests	171	130	24% ↓
Female Prostitute Arrests	357	256	29% ↓
"Pimps"	9	3	66% ↓
Lewd Acts in the City	81	51	37% ↓
Misdemeanor Drugs	65	41	37% ↓
Felony Drugs	45	57	13% ↑

We conducted an analysis on the number of calls for service as well as the "before and after" analysis by the neighborhood residents and determined that there has been a reduction in prostitution and vice related activity in the designated area. We have also received feedback from the officers and residents during neighborhood crime meetings. It will be necessary to continue this proactive approach to the problem in order to maintain the safety and quality of life in the Community. The residents maintain contact with the detectives of the Street Crimes Unit and value their presence in the community.

The Orlando Police Department's Street Crimes Unit has also collaborated with the surrounding agencies to exchange intelligence information and prevent a displacement of the problem into their jurisdiction. The local Sheriff's agency has also established a "prostitution free zone" in the

areas contiguous to the City. The City and County agencies participate in joint operations to combat vice activity.

The Street Crimes Unit has received praise from the community for its efforts. A noticeable decrease of prostitution-related activity resulted throughout the City. Several police agencies in the State have contacted the Unit to inquire as to the initiatives and makeup of the Street Crimes Unit in hopes of establishing their own unit and achieving similar results.

The Street Crimes Unit project to address prostitution in the Central Sector was drafted at the level of the command staff within the Drug Enforcement Division of the Orlando Police Department. The staff received input from the officers, sergeants, lieutenants and captains in the division. The concept of the Street Crimes Unit was formed and approved by the Chief of Police.

The Orlando Police Department uses problem oriented policing strategies in its delivery of service to the community. The Community consists of people from many different cultures and backgrounds. Consequently, the department employs individuals of diverse backgrounds, education and experience. All Orlando Police employees receive training in both the community policing philosophy as well as the Problem Oriented Policing module during orientation and the annual block training sessions.

The Orlando Police Department Drug Enforcement Division reorganized its staffing to form the new Street Crimes Unit. The Unit consists of six detectives who work plainclothes with a flexible schedule of 4-10 hour days per week. Two of the positions are long-term temporary assignments from Uniform Patrol. They are rotated every 30 days to provide opportunities for

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