

**Crime & Safety in Central City:
A Community's Perspective
Summer/Fall 2006**

METROPOLITAN CRIME COMMISSION, INC.

January 2007

New Orleans, Louisiana



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Anthony Radosti
Vice President

John R. Humphries, Jr.
Senior Analyst

Additional Staff:

Antoinette Horridge
Sandra Ellis
Alexandra Baker

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All of the residents who completed surveys and encouraged their associates and neighbors to do so as well.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Metropolitan Crime Commission (MCC) conducted a survey of Central City residents from August through November 2005, and found a neighborhood in which a majority of residents live in fear of crime, have mixed ratings of the police patrolling their neighborhood, and encounter several issues degrading the quality of life in the area. The goal of this project is to clearly identify the primary concerns of Central City residents and opinions of the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) so that resolutions to this community's concerns may be implemented.

In conjunction with the Central City Renaissance Alliance and the Young Leadership Council, the MCC developed and distributed a mail-in survey that yielded 324 responses. These respondents live throughout Central City and have a racial composition that is representative of Central City's population.

As this report was being written, an increase in violence in New Orleans resulted in nine (9) murders in the first eight (8) days of 2007. In response to these murders, thousands of citizens marched to City Hall on January 11, 2007 to express their concerns about crime in New Orleans. The concerns articulated by citizens of New Orleans at this event are largely mirrored in this report, which provides a benchmark of community perceptions prior to the implementation of initiatives to address community outcry against violent crime.

Community Concerns

Findings from this research identify an underlying and worsening fear of crime generated by several core issues:

- ♦ Seventy-nine percent (79%) of Central City residents state that they are afraid of the crime in their neighborhood.
- ♦ When asked about personal safety from crime in Central City before and after Hurricane Katrina, only 45% stated that they felt safe from crime before the storm which fell to 31% who report feeling safe from crime after the storm.
- ♦ The primary safety and community problems identified by Central City residents are rampant drug activity, murders, and a lack of opportunities for young people to positively apply themselves. Other issues of concern to a majority of residents relate to poor maintenance of the neighborhood such as garbage littering the area, blighted housing, and streetlights not functioning.

Impressions of Police

Central City residents provide a great deal of information about their perceptions of the NOPD, and many perceptions are not conducive for a community to work in partnership with law enforcement to resolve

problems with crime. Residents acknowledge that the police are somewhat effective, but they identify many areas in which the NOPD can improve its service to the community:

- Overall residents give the NOPD in Central City moderate job performance ratings. Over two-thirds (71%) feel that the police are doing an “okay job” (45%) or better (26%), while 29% feel they are doing a bad job.
- Most (73%) Central City residents see police patrolling their neighborhood several times per week (25%) or every day (48%). Survey results also show that those who see the NOPD on patrol more often are more likely to give the NOPD higher job performance ratings.
- The strongest rated aspects of police performance are a 59% majority who see the police as helpful and 56% who feel the police respond quickly to emergencies. Overall, residents rate the NOPD’s ability to respond to criminal incidents as their strongest aspect of job performance. The converse of these statistics is that 41% do not find the police helpful and 44% feel they do not respond quickly to emergencies.
- A 62% majority of residents do not think the NOPD does a good job of preventing crime, which is not surprising given the large percentage of respondents who report fear of crime.
- Significant percentages of Central City residents express doubts about the overall professionalism of the NOPD. Half of respondents or less think that the police act professionally (51%), are respectful of people (49%), or are trustworthy (43%). In addition, 46% indicate that the NOPD is too rough on the people that they stop.

Community Generated Solutions

Although residents express many serious concerns about police job performance, they state that a stronger and more community-involved police presence is the main way to make them feel safer in Central City. Other recommendations provided in open-ended responses include more activities and facilities for youth, cleaning up the trash and blighted homes in the neighborhood, and stronger relationships between neighbors living in Central City. Residents also express a high degree of interest in participating in a neighborhood watch program to help reduce the crime problem.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Residents portray Central City as overwhelmed with prolific drug activity and murders, coupled with many quality of life concerns such as a lack of productive and positive activities for area youth and problems with trash, lighting, and blighted housing.

The positive finding in these results is the commitment Central City residents show to working to resolve crime and safety problems in the community. Many respondents express a willingness to be actively engaged in addressing crime problems by joining a neighborhood watch program or volunteering with

area youth, and a vast majority of those currently living in Central City chose to return after Hurricane Katrina, even though most were fearful of crime before the storm.

The principal recommendation of this research is for the NOPD to proactively address community misgivings about police through building greater community awareness of their presence and activities. The MCC also recommends recording Officer and suspect interactions with dashboard-mounted video cameras in police units, which will memorialize police encounters with citizens and should improve police/citizen interactions. Earning the trust and confidence of the community is critical in the criminal justice system's efforts to curtail criminal activity.

In addition, the MCC respectfully recommends that city leadership and community groups and leaders take the actions necessary to clean up Central City, involve more neighborhood children in constructive activities, work to improve police/community relations, and develop a neighborhood watch program to unite this community against crime.

These results benchmark Central City residents' perceptions of crime and law enforcement before the January 11, 2007 march upon City Hall and before New Orleans city leadership announced several changes that they will apply to their crime fighting strategies. The MCC will follow-up this research in 2008 to document the impact with the public of new community policing initiatives and other initiatives to better address crime in New Orleans.

RESEARCH GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of this safety planning process is to identify and address the crime and safety problems of Central City residents. The Metropolitan Crime Commission (MCC) and its community partners hope to apply the findings of this research to continue a process resulting in stronger relationships within the community and between community members and the police. It is also hoped that by identifying the major crime-related issues of greatest concern to area residents, resolutions can be put into place that specifically address residents' concerns and that include residents' participation.

Developing Consensus

The MCC began this process seeking to address crime concerns in a single New Orleans neighborhood that was quickly repopulating since Hurricane Katrina, had established community groups working for neighborhood improvement, and was seen as an area in need of crime intervention. The MCC chose to work in Central City, because much of it was spared from the devastating floodwaters of Hurricane Katrina and because it has several well-functioning community groups that are dedicated to community enhancements. Central City also has significant crime problems, and, as this report will show, many neighborhood residents are fearful of crime and hopeful for resolutions.

The MCC began by meeting with community leaders to discuss the prevailing perceptions of crime and the police in the community. Based upon findings from these informational interviews and in consultation with leadership of the Central City Renaissance Alliance (CCRA), the MCC crafted a survey and informational packet to disseminate to Central City residents. While the MCC's initial focus was crime, the CCRA had informational needs regarding emergency preparedness and the residents who have returned to Central City that were also included in the survey.

The Young Leadership Council, whose main office is located in Central City, was seeking an opportunity to have a positive impact in Central City and joined this community safety planning process.

Survey Dissemination

The initial wave of survey dissemination occurred on August 19, 2006, in which approximately 25 individuals from the Hands-On Foundation, the Young Leadership Council, and the MCC placed survey packets on a majority of the residences in Central City. Survey packets were placed upon residences in the targeted area whether the homes were clearly occupied or remained in ruin from the flooding of Hurricane Katrina. This method of survey dissemination was chosen, because it afforded as many Central City households as possible the opportunity to provide feedback on important community issues.

Survey packets placed upon homes included an informational cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage-paid envelope for respondents to return surveys to the MCC. A few hundred surveys were also given to several area churches for them to provide copies to their members.

The MCC presented preliminary findings to the Central City Partnership in September seeking community input on the preliminary results and asking for assistance in obtaining more completed surveys. Several attendees at the meeting assisted in distributing additional surveys. The principal of James M. Singleton Charter School also sent copies of the survey home with students for their parents to complete and return the MCC. All total of 324 surveys were completed and mailed back to the MCC.

Compiling Results

These 324 surveys' responses were entered into a database and open-ended comments were coded for analysis. Results from the initial house-to-house dissemination were compared to results from the school-based dissemination phase and no significant differences in responses were found. Based upon the sample size of 324 respondents (292 clearly indicating active residence in Central City) and an estimated 9,582 residents living in Central City¹, it is estimated that approximately 3% (one in 30) of Central City residents responded to the survey.

¹ Recovery Action Learning Laboratory, "Final Report on the Summer 2006 Survey of Central City," October 2006.

WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY?

Nearly all of the 324 survey respondents are currently Central City residents and lived there before Hurricane Katrina. These respondents are racially diverse and represent a wide range of ages. Overall, the survey yielded a robust sample of individuals representing people from throughout Central City. It is the opinions and feelings of these individuals who took the time to respond to the survey that comprise the community voice reflected in this report.

Residence of Respondents

Most respondents lived in Central City before Hurricane Katrina and returned after the storm. In spite of all the problems identified in this report and struggles associated with post-Katrina life in New Orleans, those currently living in Central City and responding to the survey have shown a sincere commitment to this neighborhood through their decision to return.

A total of 85% of respondents lived in Central City prior to Hurricane Katrina.

As Figure 1 presents, 79% are living in the same homes that they occupied before the storm. This includes approximately 40% of respondents who were renters and 40% of respondents who owned and lived in their Central City homes before the storm. An additional 6% lived in another home in Central City

FIGURE 1: Where Respondents Lived Before Hurricane Katrina

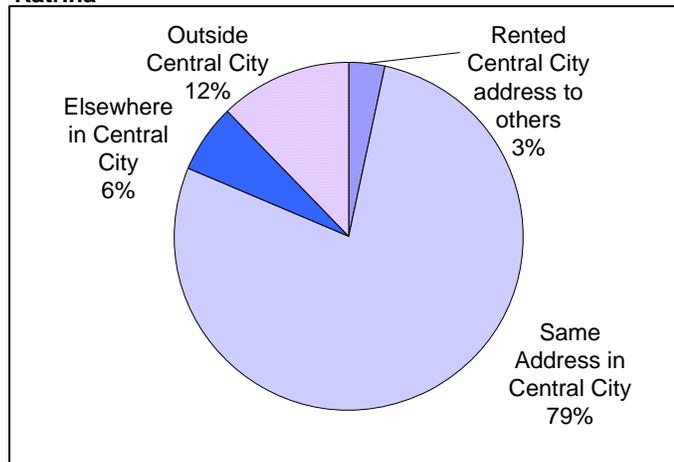
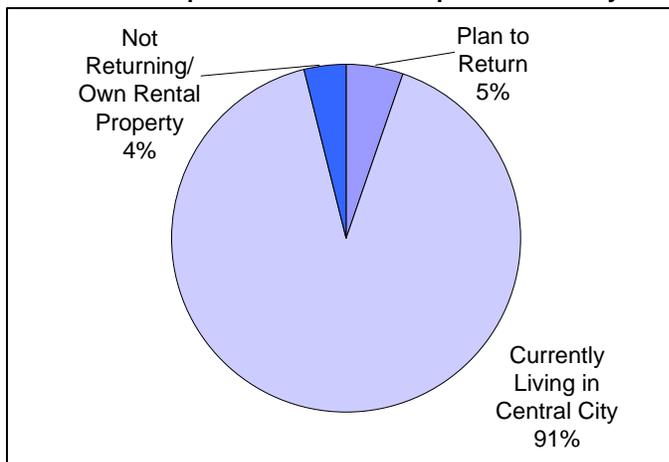


FIGURE 2: Respondents' Relationship to Central City

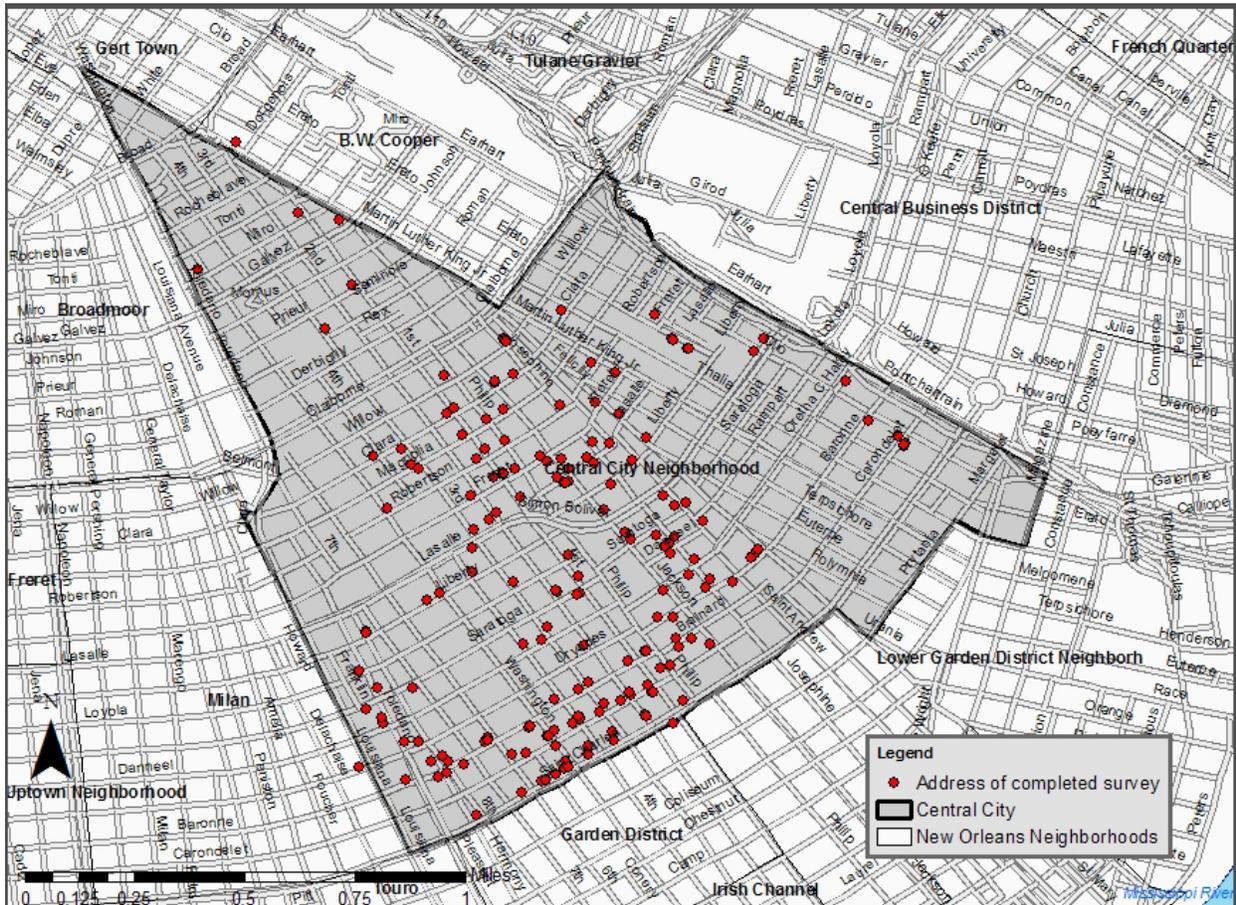


but relocated after the hurricane. Twelve percent (12%) of respondents lived outside of Central City prior to Hurricane Katrina, and 3% owned properties that they rented to others.

Figure 2, which shows respondents' current relationships to Central City, further demonstrates the strong personal investment and care that survey respondents have for the neighborhood. A 91% majority currently

resides in Central City, and 5% plan to return. Overall, 96% have shown commitment to Central City by choosing it to be their home after Hurricane Katrina. Only 4% of respondents do not live in Central City. These 4% comprise individuals who lived in Central City before Hurricane Katrina and do not intend to return (2.4%) and individuals who own property in Central City that they rent to others (1.4%).

The map below shows the location of residences for approximately 200 survey respondents. The survey asks respondents to indicate their Central City addresses, but only 200 out of the 324 provided addresses that are shown on this map. Due to the sensitive nature of the survey's topic, opinions of crime and police, it is not surprising that many elected to remain wholly anonymous by not indicating their addresses. As the map illustrates with the 200 addresses provided, survey responses originate from all over Central City and are not clustered in a single location. Many areas from which there are very few, if any, respondents are commercial areas or largely uninhabited regions which sustained substantial storm damage.

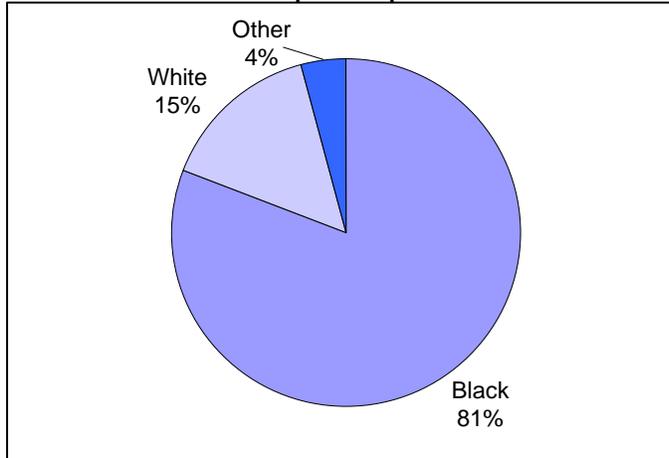


Note: To preserve anonymity, addresses indicated are in close vicinity to where they originated, but not exactly upon respondents' homes

Respondent Demographics

Examining the races of different respondents shows the sample of respondents is proportional to the racial composition of Central City. Figure 3 presents a breakdown of the races of respondents, as they

FIGURE 3: Racial Makeup of Respondents

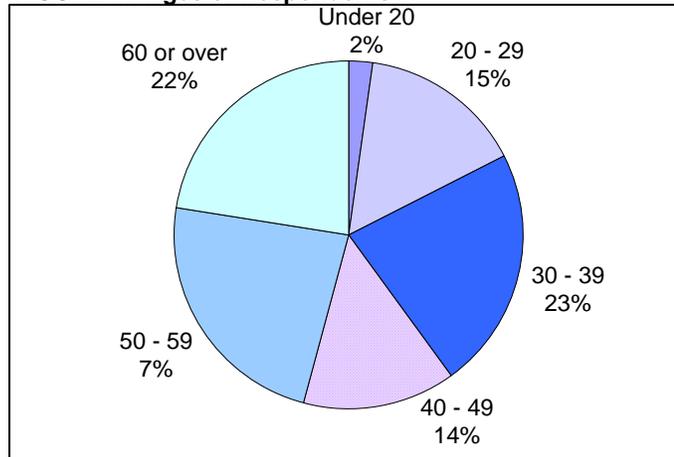


indicated on surveys. It shows that 81% of respondents are black, 15% are white, and 4% are of another race. These findings are in parity with results of another survey conducted by the Recovery Action Learning Laboratory (RALLY) in the summer of 2006. The RALLY study sampled Central City by randomly selecting houses and conducting interviews with residents. Their study found a racial composition of 85% black, 9% white, and 6% of other races. When looking at the margin of

error for both studies, the racial makeup of both samples is statistically equivalent.

Figure 4 shows that respondents comprise a broad array of ages. A small percentage (2%) are under 20 and 15% are aged 20 to 29. The two largest age groups responding to the survey are those in their 30's (23%) and over 60 (22%). Approximately a fifth (21%) are between the ages of 40 and 59.

FIGURE 4: Ages of Respondents



Examining the race and ages of individuals completing and returning surveys shows that respondents are

diverse and generally consistent with the population of Central City. Perspectives of this group of individuals present opinions from diverse but representative facets of the community, yielding results that can accurately reflect the perspective of Central City residents as a whole.

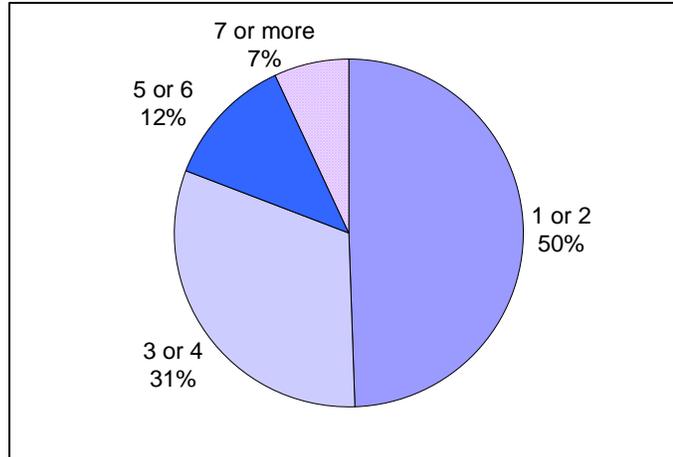
Household Composition

Over 80% of respondents' households comprise four or fewer people. As Figure 5 illustrates, half (50%) of respondents either live alone or with one other person, and 31% live in households of three or four people. Small percentages of households have five or six individuals (12%) or seven or more residents (7%).

Also of note, 27% of respondents report living with an elderly or handicapped person (not shown in figures). Surveys

coming from households with elderly and handicapped individuals were more likely to have been completed by a person aged 60 or greater, and households with elderly and handicapped individuals tended to be slightly larger. Forty-one percent of surveys coming from households with disabled or elderly persons were completed by people aged 60 or greater, and 27% had more than four people living in the household.

FIGURE 5: Number of People Living in Respondents' Households



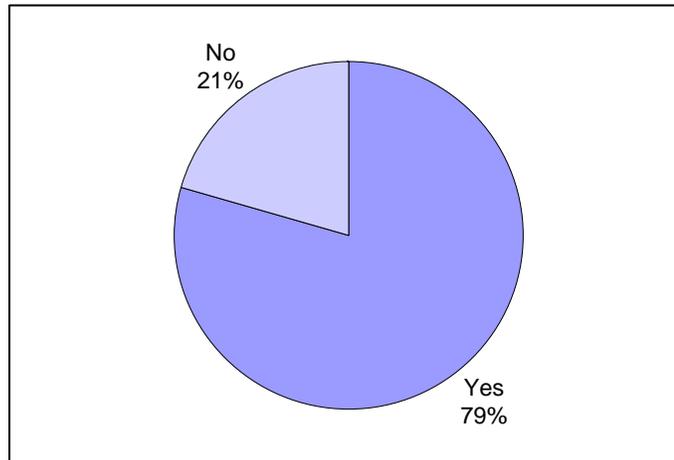
SAFETY IN CENTRAL CITY

Fear of crime is a preeminent concern for Central City residents, and it is a bigger concern today than it was before Hurricane Katrina. Residents report problems with rampant illegal drug activity, violent crime, a lack of productive opportunities for youth, poor maintenance of streetlights, and inadequate trash collection. Although very few are victims of violent crimes, over a quarter report being the victim of some form of theft. Respondents' perceptions and experiences with crime show that this community does not feel safe and results reveal specific sources of the fear among community members.

How Safe Do Residents Feel in Central City?

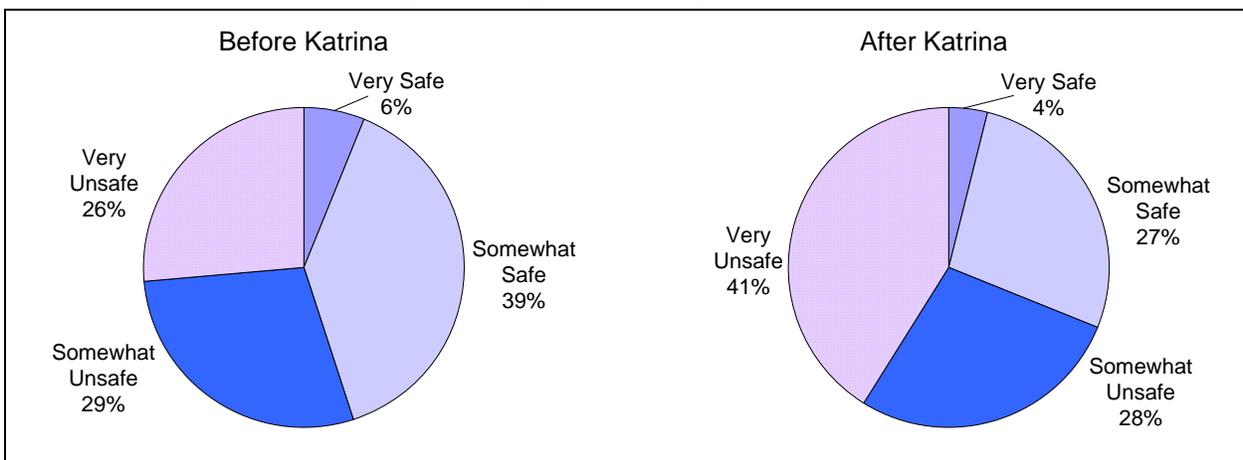
When asked if they are afraid of crime in Central City, an overwhelming 79% majority, nearly four out of five, indicates that they are fearful of crime (see Figure 6). Over half (57%) report that the import of National Guard troops into the city made them feel safer (not shown in figures), but even with the use of external reinforcements to bolster law enforcement's presence in the city, most Central City residents live in fear of the crime in their neighborhood.

FIGURE 6: Responses to "Are you afraid of crime in Central City?"



A comparison of how safe area residents report feeling in Central City today to how safe they felt before Hurricane Katrina, presented in Figure 7, shows that the neighborhood feels less safe today than it did prior to the storm.

FIGURE 7: How Safe Residents Report Feeling in Central City Before and After Hurricane Katrina

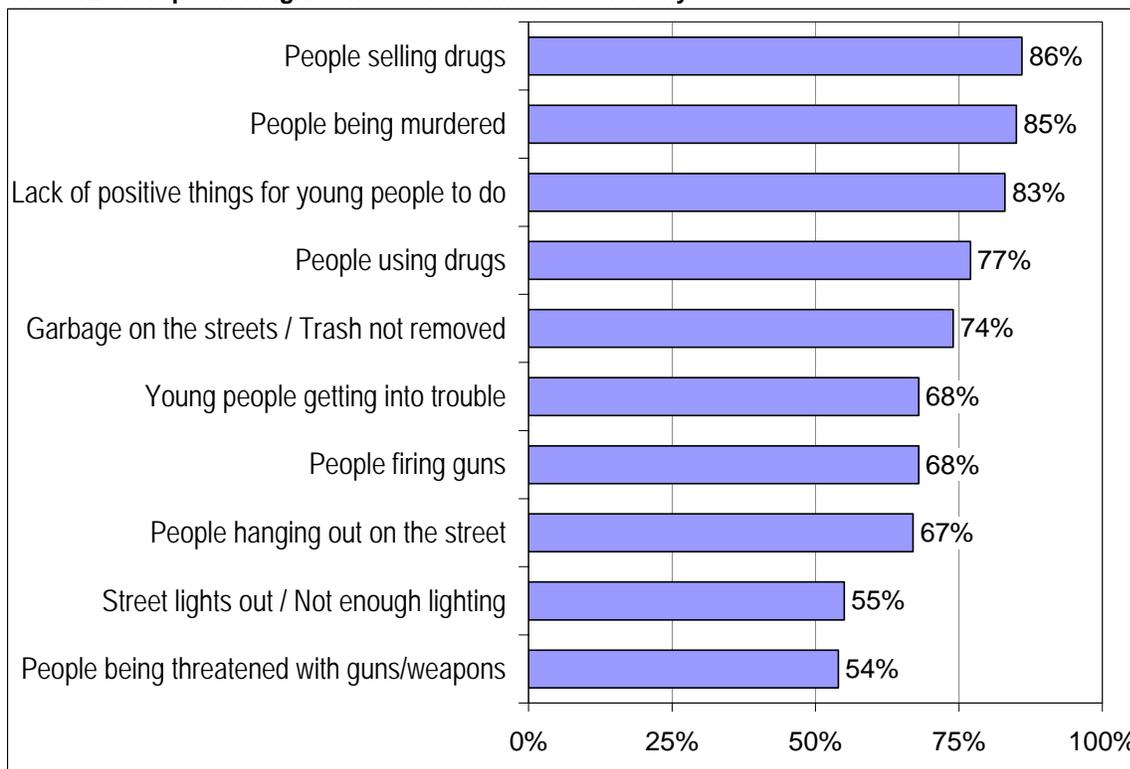


Most respondents lived in Central City prior to Hurricane Katrina and have returned since the storm. Although they chose to come home to their neighborhood, only 45% of residents (less than half) report that they felt very (6%) or somewhat (39%) safe in Central City before Hurricane Katrina. Since the storm, the percentage of residents who feel safe in Central City has shrunk to 31%. Over two thirds (69%) state that they feel unsafe in their neighborhood, including 41% who report presently feeling very unsafe in Central City. This alarming increase in perceptions of safety, coupled with the established, long-term base of residents living in Central City presents a situation in which there is a neighborhood of residents who are resolved to remain in their homes but live in a deteriorating fear of crime.

Main Problems in Central City

Respondents were presented with a checklist of potential neighborhood problems and asked to indicate the problems that are currently experienced in Central City. These issues were identified based upon interviews conducted with neighborhood residents and prominent community figures. Figure 8 below shows which problems are seen as the most concerning to residents and reveals several core themes to the safety threats that prevent a majority of Central City residents from feeling safe in their homes.

FIGURE 8: Top Ten Neighborhood Problems in Central City



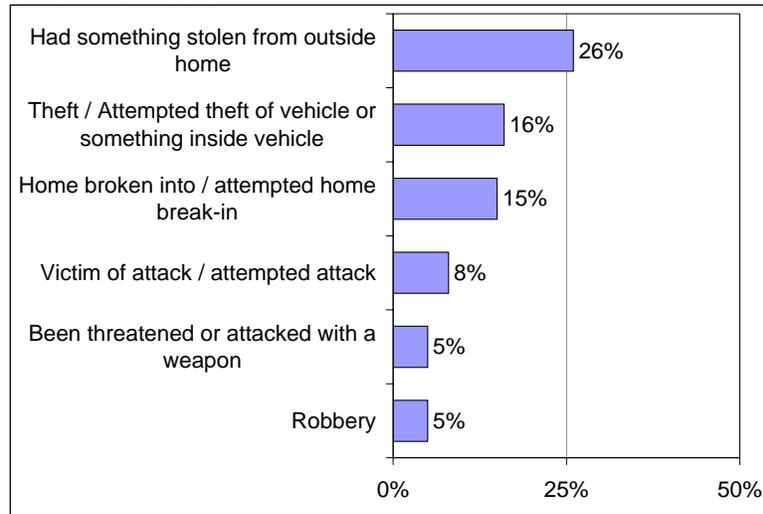
Overall, residents identify violence, drugs, poor opportunities for young people to apply themselves, and quality of life issues as the main problems in Central City:

- Residents see drugs, including distribution and use, as one of the primary safety problems in their neighborhood. With 86% indicating that drug dealing is a problem, it ranks first among problems cited by Central City residents. Additionally, 77% see drug use as a problem in Central City.
- Violence is another critical safety problem that underlies the fear of crime experienced by most people living in Central City. Eighty-five percent (85%) state that murder is a safety problem, and gunfire (cited by 68%) and people being threatened with weapons (cited by 54%) are also prominent safety issues in Central City.
- A lack of positive activities for young people is another core problem in Central City. Reportedly, there are very few structured youth activities in Central City which results in 83% seeing a lack of opportunities for youth to positively apply themselves as a problem and 68% indicating youths getting into trouble as serious neighborhood concerns.
- In addition to crime problems, Central City residents experience overabundant trash in their neighborhood (cited by 74%) and poor lighting or maintenance of streetlights (cited by 55%).
- Another significant quality of life issues is too many people idly congregating in different areas (cited by 67%), which can also cause people to feel a sense of intimidation or threat. This problem may be closely related to concerns of a lack of activities for area youths.

Crime Victimization in Central City

Most of those responding to the survey have not been direct crime victims since their return to Central City. As is shown in Figure 9, under 10% have been victims of violent crimes including an attack or attempted attack (8%), threats or attacks with weapons (5%), or robbery (5%). Unlike violent offenses, numerous residents report being victims of property crimes. Slightly over a quarter (26%) report that they have had

FIGURE 9: Respondents' Reported Victimization Since Hurricane Katrina



something stolen from outside their homes, 16% have been the victim of a theft or attempted theft associated with their cars, and 15% reporting that some has broken into or tried to break into their homes. All total, 43% of respondents have been victim of one of the items shown in Figure 9 since Hurricane Katrina.

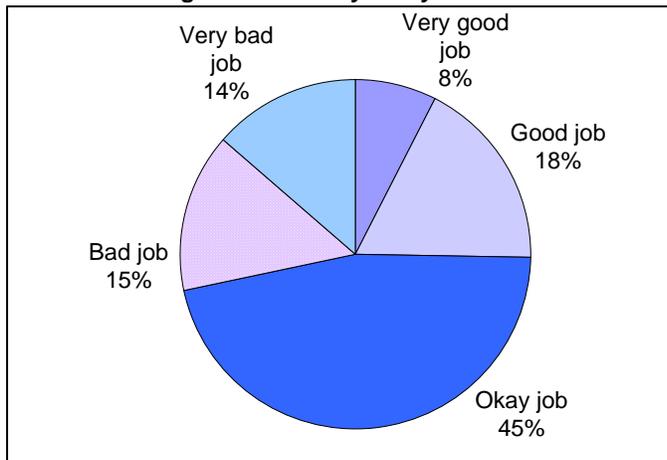
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Respondents perceive Central City as teeming with drug activity, having a pervasive threat of crime, and offering few positive ways for young people to apply themselves. Additionally, litter is commonplace and there is inadequate nighttime illumination in the area. Significant percentages of respondents have also been victims of property or violent crime. These problems are likely cumulative and related. For example, the high volume of drug distribution may be related to violence and the routine presence of people appearing to idly hang around. A lack of activities for youths gives them few positive alternatives to hanging around and provides abundant opportunity to involve themselves in mischievous or criminal activities. The trash and poor lighting may greatly contribute to perceptions of indifference to the plight of Central City residents. The culmination of these problems appears to be an overall sense of a neighborhood in extreme turmoil that provides an environment conducive for criminal activity to take place and for residents to live in continuous fear of crime.

PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE IN CENTRAL CITY

Although the success of the criminal justice system relies on numerous agencies' execution of their functions, the police are the frontline law enforcement officials with the greatest presence in the community. Residents' perceptions of the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) may determine their levels of cooperation with law enforcement and formulate their sense of the criminal justice system's ability to provide a meaningful recourse to criminal activity. The success of the criminal justice system is largely determined by the support and trust of the community who are needed report crimes and provide information and testimony about criminal activity. As the primary community representatives of the criminal justice system, the reputation and image of the NOPD are pivotal in garnering community support to successfully address crime problems.

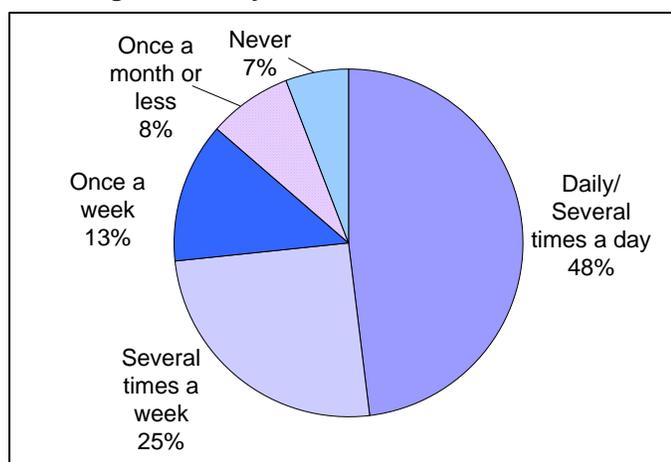
FIGURE 10: Responses to "Overall, how good of a job is the NOPD doing in Central City today?"



Overall, Central City residents give the NOPD moderate ratings of job performance. Figure 10 presents ratings of the performance of the NOPD in Central City. As the figure shows, nearly half of residents (45%) feel that the police are only doing an "Okay job" in Central City and approximately a quarter (26%) think the NOPD are doing a good job (18%) or very good job (8%). Twenty-nine percent (29%) feel that the police are doing a bad job (15%) or a very bad job (14%).

One key determinant of residents' impressions of the NOPD appears to be how often they see police patrolling Central City. As Figure 11 shows, approximately half (48%) of residents report regularly seeing NOPD officers daily or several times per day. Another quarter (25%) indicate seeing officers several times per week, and 13% see NOPD on patrol on a weekly basis. Few residents (15%) report seeing officers monthly or less (8%) or never seeing

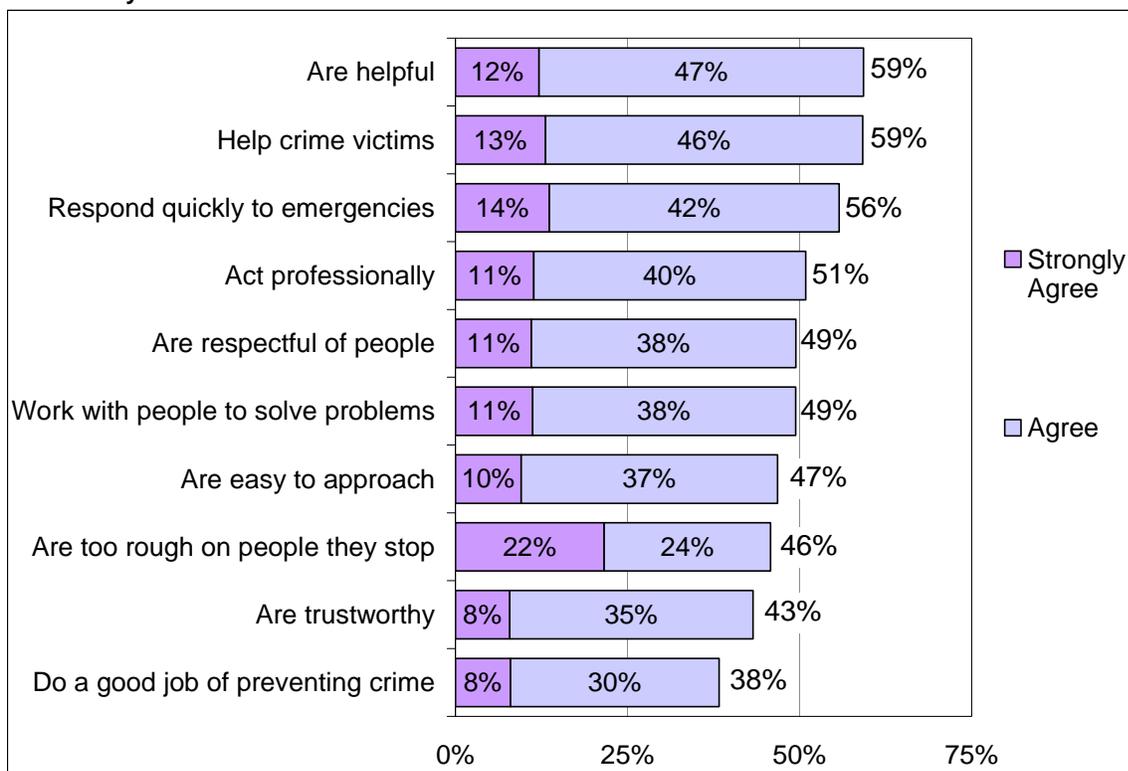
FIGURE 11: How Often Respondents See NOPD Officers Patrolling Central City



NOPD patrolling Central City (7%). Those who see officers more often appear more likely to think positively of the NOPD. Thirty-nine percent (39%) who see officers on a daily basis rate the NOPD as doing a good (25%) or very good (14%) job. Conversely, only 10% of those who report seeing police once a week or less indicate that the NOPD in Central City are doing a good (9%) or very good (1%) job.

A review of community perceptions of different aspects of police performance reveals some of the reasons that the NOPD in Central City receive moderate overall job performance ratings. Figure 12 shows the percent of respondents who agree to a series of statements about the NOPD, and it presents the community’s views of the NOPD’s strengths and weaknesses.

FIGURE 12: Percent of Respondents Who Agree That, “Since Hurricane Katrina, the NOPD in Central City . . .”



- Central City residents indicate that the police are generally helpful and responsive to emergencies. More than half indicate that the police are helpful (59%), help crime victims (59%), and respond quickly to emergencies (56%).
- The biggest perceived NOPD weakness is the department’s ability to prevent crime. Although a 56% majority expresses that the NOPD responds quickly to emergencies, only 38% feel that the NOPD does a good job of preventing crime. The impression that the police are primarily responding to incidents rather than proactively deterring crime likely contributes to the great fear of crime that exists in Central City.

- Central City residents provide ratings of the NOPD's overall treatment of people that indicate a problem with the department's reputation in the community. Half of respondents or less agree that the police act professionally (51%), are respectful (49%), are approachable (47%), and are trustworthy (43%). Additionally, 46% report that the police are too rough on the people they stop. Pervasive doubts about officer's trustworthiness, professionalism, and general disposition to the public likely serves as a barrier between law enforcement and the community that they serve.

* * *

Overall, Central City residents rate the NOPD as having moderate job performance with 71% indicating the NOPD are doing "okay" (45%) or better (26%). The NOPD's ability to respond to crime emergencies and to provide assistance in emergency situations are seen as its strong points. Most see officers on patrol in Central City on a regular basis, but the NOPD is not regarded as an effective deterrent to criminal activity. Results show that many residents have doubts about the NOPD's general professionalism and truthfulness. The overabundant fear of crime combined with a community distrust of the NOPD can only further exacerbate crime problems. The lack of faith in the NOPD articulated by large segments of the population may result in a community that does not cooperate with law enforcement and questions whether the police are capable of successfully addressing the crime problems in Central City.

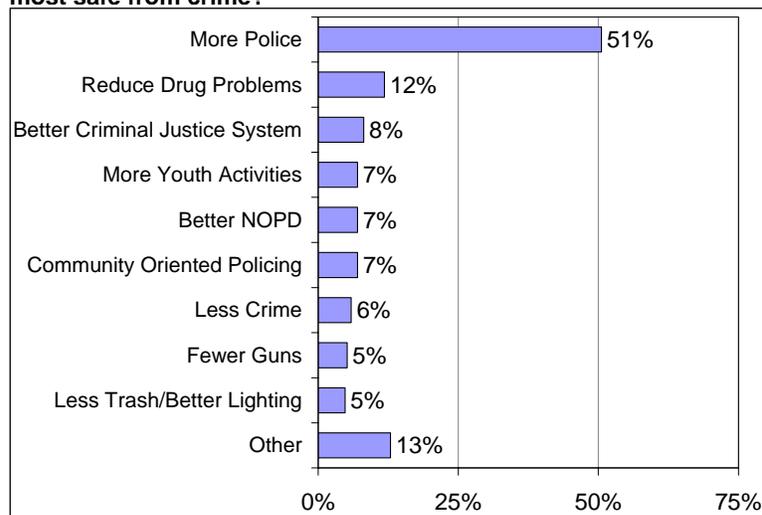
COMMUNITY SOUGHT SOLUTIONS

When asked what solutions would be most effective at addressing residents' crime concerns and at making Central City a better place to live, responses largely mirror concerns articulated throughout the survey. Respondents' recommendations for improvements generally call for more and better law enforcement, stronger ties within the community, better resources to provide positive activities for area youth, and a cleaner and better-lit neighborhood. Figure 13 presents what would make residents feel most safe from crime, and Figure 14 reviews respondents' top recommendations for making Central City a better place to live.

What Would Make Residents Feel Most Safe?

When asked what one thing would make them feel most safe from crime, residents overwhelmingly indicate that they would like to see a more visible police presence in Central City, and respondents call for several improvements in the criminal justice system. Half (51%) state that having more police would make them feel safer in Central City. A smaller percentage (8%) indicates that a more effective criminal justice system that successfully

FIGURE 13: Responses to, "What one thing would make you feel most safe from crime?"

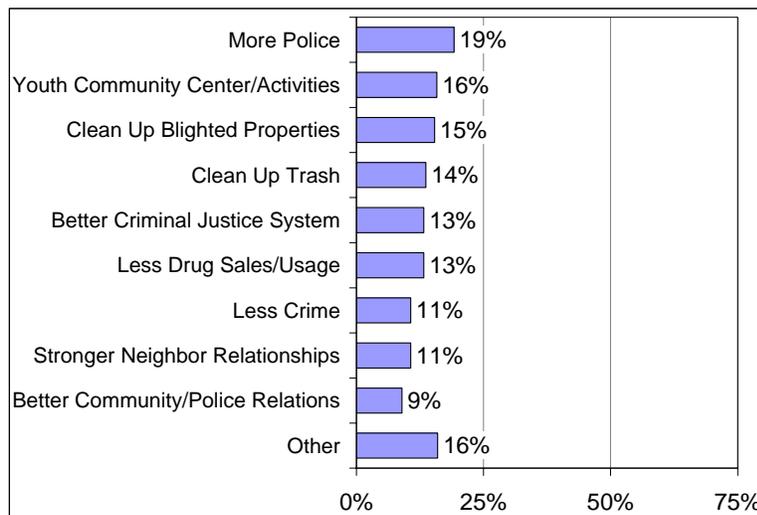


removes criminals from the community would make them feel safer. Other law enforcement recommendations include a "better" police department that is more professional and trustworthy (cited by 7%), and community oriented policing (cited by 7%). Many also state that reductions in problems with drugs (cited by 12%), guns (cited by 5%), and crime in general (cited by 6%) would make them feel safer in Central City. A small but significant percentage (7%) sees more activities for youths as critical to addressing the crime problems in Central City. Five percent (5%) feel that better lighting and a cleaner neighborhood would make it feel safer, and 13% identify a variety of other potential things such as better schools, prayer, and self-protection as ways to make themselves feel less afraid of crime in Central City.

What Would Make Central City a Better Place to Live?

In contrast to Figure 13, which emphasizes the **one** thing that would make residents feel safer, Figure 14 presents the things that respondents indicate would overall make Central City a better place to live. Reports of what would make Central City a better place to live overall are less focused on crime (although crime is still emphasized) and reveal a variety of ways to improve conditions for Central City residents.

FIGURE 14: Recommendations to Make Central City a Better Place to Live



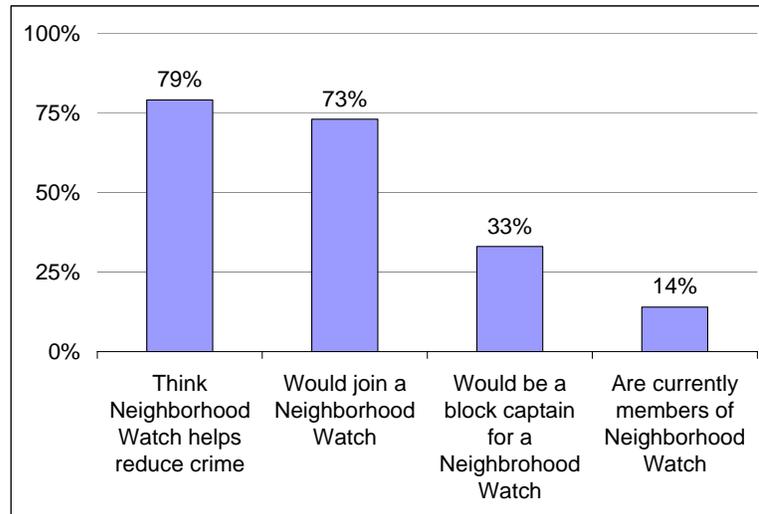
As with responses to the question about what would make Central City safer, respondents most often state that an increased police presence in Central City would make it a better place to live. Nineteen percent (19%) state that the neighborhood would be a better place to live if there were more police. Other recommendations from respondents pertain to needs identified previously such as a youth community center or better activities for youths (cited

by 16%), cleaning up blighted homes (cited by 15%) and trash in the neighborhood (cited by 14%), and achieving meaningful reductions in the area’s drug problem (cited by 13%). Several also call for improvements in the overall criminal justice system (cited by 13%) and a better relationship between the community and the police (cited by 9%). Additionally, many (11%) express that stronger relationships between neighbors and building a stronger sense of community would help make Central City a better place to live. Recommendations in the “other” category were mentioned by fewer than 10% and include addressing problems with loitering and gun crimes, better economic opportunities and a stronger education system, as well as several quality of life issues such as less trash and litter in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Watch

Another potential way to address crime problems is the formation of a neighborhood watch program. As Figure 15 shows, respondents state that they believe a neighborhood watch would be a successful remedy to crime problems and most would participate in a neighborhood watch. A 79% majority of respondents (the same percentage that indicates being afraid of crime in Central City) believe that neighborhood watch helps reduce crime, and 73% indicate that they would join a neighborhood watch. Additionally, a third (33%) of respondents state that they would be a block captain for a neighborhood watch. With only 14% currently participating in neighborhood watch activities, compared to 79% who are willing to join and many who are willing to lead their block's activities, there appears to be a clear demand for this type of program in Central City.

FIGURE 15: Respondent Perspectives on Neighborhood Watch



* * *

Community members responding to the survey see several tangible means of making Central City safer and making it a better place to live. These recommendations are largely derived from open-ended responses to survey questions, but specific questions about neighborhood watch show that there is a great deal of interest in bringing this established neighborhood safety program to Central City. The main requests to improve Central City are better law enforcement, more activities for youths, and a generally cleaner neighborhood. These recommendations are in parity with and verify the prominent problems identified earlier in this report.

The recommendation for more effective law enforcement is multifaceted. First, residents would like to see more police on patrol. Although nearly three-fourths see police on patrol several times per week or more often, Central City residents would like to see and feel a stronger police presence in their neighborhood. Impressions of the NOPD appear to improve with increased awareness of their presence, and,

irregardless of concerns about the NOPD's reputation, residents request for an enhanced police presence indicates they are reassured when they see NOPD officers in their area.

Residents would also like to better know the officers working in their neighborhood. Officers walking a beat, mounted patrols, and police substations are specific recommendations provided by respondents. Stronger ties to members of the community can help establish a better sense of trust for the police, and positive interactions with NOPD officers can reassure those concerned about the professionalism of the department. Central City residents are afraid of crime and would welcome a strong law enforcement presence that instilled confidence that crime is being appropriately redressed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The elementary conclusion from this research is that Central City residents live in ongoing fear of crime and they do not perceive that the NOPD is effectively addressing their community's crime problems. Many report being victims of crime since Hurricane Katrina, and the perception is that crime has become worse since the storm. Residents routinely see police patrolling outside their homes, but the community perspective is that police are generally effective at responding to emergencies but not capable of preventing crime. The NOPD is regarded as having somewhat positive overall job performance, but, according to survey respondents, they have a reputation for lacking in professionalism and trustworthiness among at least half of the Central City population. The culmination of all these findings is that Central City residents fear crime and do not see a resolution to crime problems through the approaches applied to this neighborhood at the time of the survey.

Recommendation 1: Build a stronger relationship between law enforcement and Central City residents.

The NOPD, as the initial responders and the face of the criminal justice system, may unfairly bear the brunt of the blame for failures of the entire criminal justice system. More than 9 out of 10 individuals arrested for state criminal offenses were not incarcerated for their crimes before Hurricane Katrina², and the criminal justice system continues to struggle with redeveloping itself since the storm. Criminal District Court was not fully reopened until late October 2006, there are 5,000 fewer pre-trial jail beds, and manpower losses for both the NOPD and District Attorney's Office have certainly had a detrimental impact on the criminal justice system's ability to bring justice to the community for criminal activity in their neighborhoods.

The NOPD's Sixth District, in which Central City resides, hosts monthly New Orleans Neighborhood Anti-Crime (NONPAC) meetings, and Sixth District Commander Robert Bardy regularly attends and participates in community meetings. In addition, there was a high-profile series of drug-related indictments in November 2006 that targeted a drug distribution network in Central City. The MCC commends these efforts by the NOPD to be available and accountable to the community and the well-publicized dismantling of a drug dealing operation. However, the prevailing perception among Central City residents is that the NOPD and the entire criminal justice system are not successfully combating crime in their neighborhood.

The MCC respectfully recommends that the NOPD and the criminal justice system undertake measures to make their presence more tangible to Central City residents. Efforts to accomplish this can begin with

² "Performance of the New Orleans Criminal Justice System 2003-2004" the Metropolitan Crime Commission, August 2005

a well thought out effort to improve police/community relations that result in a safer community. Strategies recommended by respondents include foot patrols, mounted patrols, and police substations to make the officers more prevalent in the area. While these measures may not be practical due to current manpower limitations, there are ways to make the public aware of the NOPD's commitment to community public safety. For instance, the NOPD could periodically send officers door-to-door in the community to introduce themselves and leave business cards for concerned citizens to report crime and safety concerns without others being aware that they are cooperating with the police.

Some residents articulated concerns that being seen talking to the police created a personal threat, because criminals would perceive them as in collusion with law enforcement. An active NOPD presence in which officers routinely interact with people in the community would increase communication between residents and the police, build stronger ties to the community, and remove some of the stigma associated with being seen speaking to the police. Other efforts such as increased patrols, more high profile announcement of major arrests, sharing information about criminal activity on a real-time basis, and more publicized announcements of police/community meetings could also help to make Central City residents have a better sense of police presence and NOPD activities in their neighborhood. Improved police/community interactions can also help to build a greater sense of trust between neighborhood residents and the NOPD.

Another positive way to address concerns of professionalism within the NOPD is to mount video cameras in police units to record police encounters with citizens. These cameras will memorialize police encounters with citizens and should improve police/citizen interactions. Additionally, when an officer finds someone in possession of narcotics or weapons, the cameras can clearly document that contraband was directly taken from an individual.

Recommendation 2: Establish Neighborhood Watch in Central City

There is a wealth of organizations, churches, and community groups in Central City capable of serving as the leaders in building a neighborhood watch program. Based upon survey findings, most residents would eagerly participate if they were given the opportunity and informed what this program entails. The specific details of how the program should be structured would be most effective if it were made in its own model in a manner that has the most value and is most relevant to Central City residents. Guidance from established Central City community leaders is critical to successfully establishing this program that can build stronger ties between residents and law enforcement as well as make residents feel safer from crime. Not all community members attend NONPAC meetings or participate in community groups. Therefore, proactive and non-traditional measures such as reaching out to religious, civic, social, and business groups may be necessary to contact Central City residents.

One major function of a neighborhood watch would be to inform neighborhood residents about law enforcement resources available to them. A few respondents indicated that calling 911 to report a crime would result in the NOPD going to their homes, which would imperil them by targeting them as an informant. The community fear against reporting crime can be overcome by informing them of policies regarding 911 callers and notifying them of opportunities to discretely furnish information to law enforcement. For example, the Sixth District offers “hot sheets” that would allow residents to anonymously inform them of criminal activity. In addition, the MCC and Crime Stoppers are potential resources offering legally protected anonymity to those seeking to provide information to law enforcement without identifying themselves.

Recommendation 3: Create Greater Opportunities for Youth to Positively Apply Themselves

One of the main problems facing Central City is an unfortunate lack of activities for the neighborhood’s youth. Residents state that there were inadequate resources for children such as playgrounds and organized activities prior to Hurricane Katrina and the problem has only worsened since the storm. One aspect of creating more opportunities for youths may simply be a matter of doing a better job of informing area residents of the existing programs for children and adolescents.

Additionally, the MCC respectfully asks that city and community leaders develop means to offer Central City children and adolescents more productive and worthwhile activities within their community. Activities developed and implemented by the community are likely to have greater appeal to area youth and be more enduring than specific recommendations coming from an outside individual or organization. It is hoped that the results of this research will stimulate interest in this community problem and potentially be used to attract funding to develop youth-oriented activities in Central City and possibly lead to the establishment of a new community center. In addition, the survey asked respondents if they would be willing to volunteer to work with area youth in directed activities. More than 85 respondents furnished their names and phone numbers to the MCC so that they could be contacted to volunteer. These individuals’ contact information has been forwarded to the Central City Renaissance Alliance so that these willing community members can work to improve the problem with a lack of positive activities for Central City children.

Recommendation 4: Clean Up Central City

Inadequate lighting can result in dark areas that may feel very intimidating at night and could provide hospitable cover for criminal activity. Broken lights combined with blighted housing and uncollected trash and litter throughout the neighborhood can compound an overall sense of despair and a lack of concern for the quality of life of neighborhood residents.

Problems with trash collection and streetlight maintenance are largely the responsibility of the City of New Orleans, and the MCC respectfully calls upon city leadership to articulate a plan to inform residences of

when lights are scheduled to be repaired and when trash, including abandoned cars, will be removed from the streets.

The problem of litter is a neighborhood problem that residents need to take responsibility to correct in the areas surrounding their homes. There are currently several community-initiated efforts underway to improve the landscaping and to clean up specific areas of Central City, and the MCC commends these initiatives which are important to residents. In areas that are largely commercial or that remain in decay from being abandoned since Hurricane Katrina, additional volunteer support or potential use of Sheriff's inmates could be solicited to address problems with abundantly visible litter.

Recommendation 5: Repeat This Survey Process

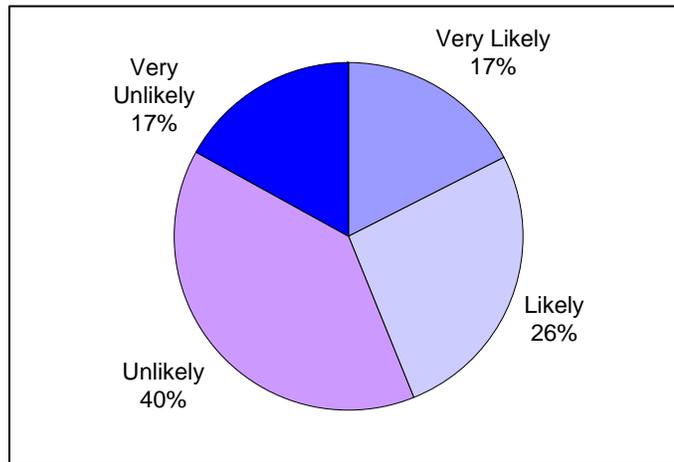
Since this survey was completed, a community gathering occurred outside of City Hall on January 11, 2007 in which citizens of New Orleans expressed anger and frustration at the growing crime problem in the city. This gathering was attended by thousands of New Orleans residents who marched to City Hall to express their concerns about growing problems with violent crime in the city. Although community outcry has largely been in response to nine (9) murders that occurred in the first eight (8) days of 2007, New Orleans citizens expressed ongoing frustration with many problems within the New Orleans criminal justice system. In response to vocal community distress about crime problems, government and community leaders have identified several measures that will be undertaken to address the crime problems in New Orleans. The MCC will follow-up this research in 2008 to document the impact with the public of new community policing initiatives and other initiatives to better address crime in New Orleans.

APPENDIX I: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Another safety-related issue is emergency preparedness. This issue is of concern, because so many New Orleanians and Central City residents were not prepared for the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and found themselves in unfortunate circumstances as a result of the storm. This topic is addressed as an addendum, because most residents will take the appropriate actions if another storm approaches.

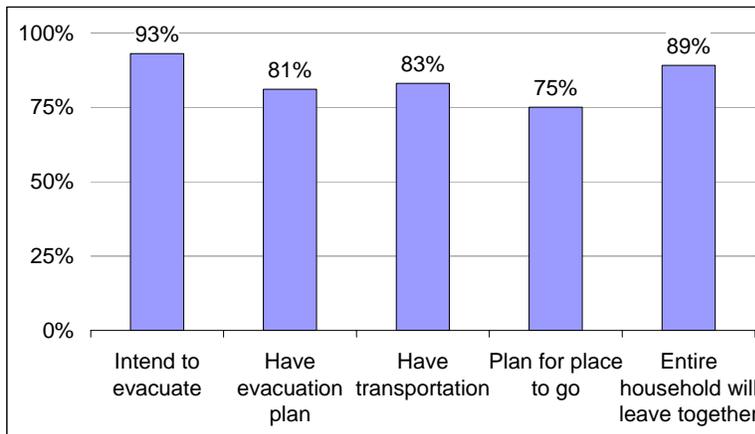
As figure 16 illustrates, Central City residents do not have widespread concerns of another storm causing severe damage to the area in 2006. Over half (57%) indicate that it is unlikely (40%) or very unlikely (17%) that another major storm will strike New Orleans. With only 17% indicating another storm is very likely, there is not a strong sense that the city is significantly threatened by another natural disaster in the near future.

FIGURE 16: Perceived Likelihood that a Storm Will Cause Widespread Damage to New Orleans



Although most do not think another storm is likely in the immediate future, the overwhelming majority of residents intend to take appropriate action if an evacuation is ordered. Figure 17 reviews the courses of action that Central City residents plan to take if an evacuation is ordered.

FIGURE 17: Plans If an Evacuation Is Ordered



A 93% majority plan to leave if an evacuation is ordered. Additionally, 81% have evacuation plans, 83% have transportation, and 75% know where they will go. Most (89%) plan for their entire household to evacuate together. What these findings reveal is that the vast majority of Central City residents will protect themselves

and their families by evacuating if another storm comes. While there does need to be a plan to address the needs of the 7% who will not evacuate, most Central City residents will not make themselves vulnerable to the aftermath that the city experienced after Hurricane Katrina.