CRIME CONTROL AND PREVENTION DISTRICT 2024 CRIME CONTROL PLAN

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MONTGOMERY POLICE DEPARTMENT
CRIME CONTROL AND PREVENTION DISTRICT
CRIME CONTROL PLAN
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Establishing the City of Montgomery Crime Control and Prevention District will make it possible for the Montgomery Police Department to address several issues that are growing in significance. The natural growth of the city, along with the emergence of new crime trends such as designer drugs, theft, assaults, fraud, and violent repeat offenders, are becoming major law enforcement challenges. The increasing population and inherent traffic problems raise the demands on the Police Department. All these conditions often result in unfavorable police response times to police calls for service, forcing citizens to wait even longer for a police response.

Implementing a Crime Control and Prevention District will assist in offsetting the costs of additional police personnel and equipment which ordinarily would be funded by the General Fund. The creation of a Crime Control District would enable the Police Department to make a significant impact on the goals and compelling issues that were identified in 2022-2023 end of the year report. The Montgomery Police Department regularly provides the citizens of Montgomery with a low response time. To maintain that low response time with the incoming business growth and increased population of Montgomery, as well as the consistent increase in certain types of calls, it is apparent that staffing levels, while steady at this time, will need to increase in the next one to two years to prevent any stacking of calls. The City Council, City Management, and the Police Department must always stay in contact and look at how they can develop a plan to address the increasing needs of the Police Department as they continue to grow. The development of the District Board would assist in creating a Crime Control District so that improved police services would not adversely impact other departments across the growing City of Montgomery.

Current service levels can be sustained in the long term if staffing and equipment quality in the Police Department are maintained and allowed to increase incrementally with the city's growth. Considering this, it is paramount to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Police Department and the City that the voters approve the Crime Control and Prevention District for at least a five-year term. Setting this five-year term will allow the Montgomery Police Department to provide the community with a professional police service with proper staffing levels, quality training, and equipment with minimal impact on the general fund. The following sections explain the impact the Crime Control and Prevention District funding can provide for the Montgomery Police Department.

Violence

The City of Montgomery is considered one of safes cities in this county. However, as we look at the increase in violence in the growing Montgomery County area, this has brought to light other enforcement issues that cannot be ignored. The storing, distribution, and use of narcotics is beginning to have a dramatic effect on our violent crime within the City of Montgomery. On March 21, Sergeant Graves conducted a traffic stop that resulted in the arrest of a subject for felony Manufacture or Delivery of a Controlled Substance. Inside the vehicle, Sergeant Graves located a small scale,

numerous small zip baggies, and several controlled substances in various quantities including Meth, PCP, heroin, fentanyl, and amphetamines. As a result of the drug seizure, the suspect's 2021 Ram 1500 has been seized by the City of Montgomery and is going through the asset forfeiture process with the District Attorney's Office.

Our Detective Sergeant has discovered by speaking with witnesses and victims of violent crimes that most of the offenders were involved with the illegal use and distribution of narcotics in some way. Unfortunately, most of the time these facts only come to light during the investigation and after the damage has been done. The proactive enforcement of this type of activity could have been prevented or possibly deterred before the commission of a crime. However, the Montgomery Police Department will train and utilize its staffing resources in the near future to investigate narcotics activity throughout the city proactively.

Traffic

In 2023, Montgomery County was noted as one of the fastest growing counties in United States with a growth from 2022-2023 of 4.7% and shows no signs of slowing. The largest City in Montgomery County (Conroe) continues to experience growth both in residential and commercial areas of the city. The growth in their population fuels the population of The City of Montgomery, the unincorporated areas which surround Montgomery, as well as the proximity of the Metroplex to this area all contribute to traffic congestion on roadways like FM 149, I-45, FM 1097, and Highway 105, are major traffic arteries running through and to the city of Montgomery.

Construction is necessary and anticipated in the next couple of years in all the above-mentioned areas to accommodate ever-growing traffic congestion. However, construction will only make matters worse for travel in and through the city. Traffic problems and traffic violations are by far the most frequently received complaints from the public. This trend will likely continue as the city grows. The citizens feel the effects of traffic congestion, not only when they travel within the city, but also when the police are called to their homes and businesses. Traffic congestion, increased road construction, and increased traffic accidents will inevitably make it difficult for the police to reach the people who need them. For perspective, the number of accidents from 2021 to 2023 has increased by 21.21%.

We must provide the community with a viable solution to the issue. In June of 2020, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) published an article, "Effect of High-Visibility Enforcement on Motor Vehicle Crashes." Within the article the author addresses the limited amount of research being conducted on this topic. However, the author writes research available does "suggest that sustained enforcement actions discouraging the driving behaviors that lead to crashes can have a positive impact on reducing them." (Williams, 2020)

The Montgomery Police Department relies heavily on the patrol officer to provide traffic enforcement in all areas within the city. However, with our increased call load over the last few years, it has taken away some of the opportunity for officers to provide the traffic enforcement necessary to meet the needs of the community. The implementation of the Montgomery Crime Control and Prevention District will aim to decrease the amount of traffic accidents by providing increased patrols in areas where traffic accidents are likely to occur.

Community Engagement

Controlling crime in the City of Montgomery is a collaborative effort between the Montgomery Police Department and the community. The Montgomery Police Department is working hard to strengthen the relationship with the community through community engagement activities. We must provide mechanisms for the community to get more involved in crime prevention and crime fighting. Reassuring the community that fighting crime is a collaborative effort between the police department and the community they serve should be our priority.

In 2023, the Montgomery Police Department applied for a grant via the United States Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Service (COPS) Hiring Grant. The grant would cover 36 months of payroll expenses for two new officer positions, with the agreement that the city would take over from month 37 and beyond. We, unfortunately, were not awarded funding through this grant. However, with the help of the city council, we've been able to fill those positions in patrol allowing us more opportunity to address other issues. The Crime Control and Prevention District will focus on providing equipment, training, and much needed funding to increase our engagement with the community. The funding will also be used to absorb new staffing positions, lessening the impact on the General Fund.

The objective of the agency and the Community Engagement efforts will promote collaboration and increase trust with our citizens by increasing our interactions with members of the community.

Conclusion

The approval of the Montgomery Crime Control and Prevention District is crucial to the Montgomery Police Department's future. The Montgomery Police Department's ability to provide a safe environment in which families, businesses, and individuals can pursue their daily activities without concern or worry about crime is dependent upon this referendum. The increasing population growth of those who live, shop, and travel through the Montgomery community, requires a more than adequate response time, effective community engagement activities, a level of transparency to keep the public informed, and current relevant investigative capabilities. The additional funding this would provide will allow us to keep up with all the law enforcement and community outreach challenges that come with this growth.

Low Response times to priority 1 calls for service must be maintained and a lower response time to our priority 2 calls for service must be reached. The rise in the number of calls for service dictates the need to monitor this statistic or stand the chance of stacking calls or in other words, holding priority calls. Implementing geographical policing strategies will also assist in our goal of lower response times. However, we have been unable to implement this needed strategy because of inadequate staffing. Our ability to successfully implement geographical policing is contingent on this referendum.

The additional revenue will help to transform the Police Department into the best-staffed, best-equipped, and most efficient law enforcement agency this city has ever had. Ultimately, we understand the voters will decide whether their Police Department will receive these necessary resources to provide safe neighborhoods, safe shopping experiences, and safe community events, as well as being well equipped and trained with the latest technologies to help keep the City of Montgomery a desirable place. We remain committed to our vision, but we are at a point where the lack of resources could greatly affect our ability to accomplish our vision.

Montgomery Police Department Mission Statement:

The Montgomery Police Department is dedicated to forging a partnership with the community we serve. It is the mission of the Montgomery Police Department to provide for the protection of lives and property, preserve the public peace, and provide needed community services with the highest level of professionalism and ethical standards effectively and efficiently.

Goals and Objectives

The Montgomery Police Department has long held true to our mission statement. As an agency our primary goal is to ensure we meet the vision and values of our city and the community we serve. The goals and objectives encompassed in the following strategic plan is how we, as a police organization, fulfill the Montgomery Police Department Mission Statement and the community's priorities:

Montgomery Police Department's Vision: To be a modern, progressive organization collaborating with our community to provide a safe and caring environment that enhances quality of life in the City of Montgomery.

Montgomery Police Department's Core Values: Our employees serve the residents of Montgomery with the following values:

A **- Accountability** - Responsible for all our decisions and actions.

S **- Stewardship** - Dedicated to responsible use of resources.

P **- Professionalism** - Maintain public confidence, trust, and pride. We will always be truthful and trustworthy.

I **- Integrity** - Doing the right things, for the right reasons, all of the time.

R **- Respect** - Treat all with courtesy, compassion, fairness, and dignity.

E **- Excellence** - Committed to the highest ethical and legal standards in everything we do.

The Montgomery Police Department's Strategic Plan identified five major goals which will assist in reaching the above vision, and values of the Montgomery Police Department, as well as the needs and values of our community. These goals, vision, and values were selected to allow us a unit to measure and to gauge our performance to ensure effectiveness of the plan throughout the next couple of years. These goals are based upon what the community consistently views as a priority.

The goals are not meant to be all inclusive in what can be achieved by the Montgomery Police Department's Crime Control and Prevention District but will provide the Police Department guidelines to a path of success. The following is the list of goals for the first two years of the strategic plan:

- Maintain low response times for Priority 1 emergency calls for service and improve on our response times to Priority 2 calls for service.
- Increased police officer visibility in neighborhoods, shopping areas, and our park system.

- Promote collaboration and increase trust with our citizens.
- Demonstrate proactive, progressive, and preventative policing at all levels of the organization.
- Enhance crime fighting and investigative abilities and maintain and update technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The following objectives were created to help achieve each goal over the next two years. It is our intent to review these objectives annually to ensure maximum effectiveness in achieving our City's and Department's mission, vision, and values. The objectives may change to ensure they are achieving the major goals of the strategic plan.

Priority Response Times

Goal: Maintain low response times for Priority 1 emergency calls for service and improve on our response times to Priority 2 calls for service.

Over the last few years, the Montgomery Police Department has seen an increase in the number of traffic accidents to which they respond. The increasing population on our already crowded roadways is a contributing factor in the rise in accidents. The increase is concerning, in and of itself, however it also contributes to the response time for all our first responders. The number of accidents worked by officers pulls much needed assets like addressing traffic enforcement and our ability to respond to other calls for service in other areas of the City of Montgomery. Whereas our current Priority 1 response time averages around 2 and a half to 3 minutes our Priority 2 response time needs some improvement, as it currently sits near 5 to 7 minutes.

The Crime Control and Prevention District funding will provide the agency with additional personnel to respond to accidents and clear the roadways in a timely manner. Ultimately, improving the efficiency with which the agency clears the roadways, improving response times for all first responders. Additionally, more personnel and resources will assist the agency in preventing accidents on our roadways.

Research has shown the level of traffic enforcement on the nation's roadways has a causal effect on the number of accidents an agency experiences throughout their jurisdiction. The Institute of Justice (NIJ) in 2020 cited in an article regarding the effectiveness of traffic enforcement on the number of accidents which occur as follows:

"Research available does suggest that sustained enforcement actions discouraging the driving behaviors that lead to crashes can have a positive impact on reducing them. [ ] (Williams, 2020)

The additional personnel and equipment will assist the Montgomery Police Department by providing added traffic enforcement geared at bringing down the number of accidents which occur within the City of Montgomery. Our ability to have a positive effect on the number of accidents which occur within the City of Montgomery will provide a more effective response for all first responders while helping to provide safe roadways for everyone.

Geographical Policing Strategies

Goals: *Increased police officer visibility in neighborhoods, shopping areas, and our parks. And Promote collaboration and increase trust with our citizens.*

Agencies across the United States have seen great success in implementing geographical policing strategies. The Montgomery Police Department has never successfully implemented the strategy, mainly (but not exclusively) because of inadequate staffing in the patrol section. Geographical policing strategies provide the community with a more direct link to the police department. The concept is to assign officers to a district for 6 months to a year in which they become familiar with their assigned area. The assignment allows officers to interact with members of the community more regularly, ultimately improving the relationship. Officers will be given the opportunity to come up with innovative ideas on how to solve crime in their districts/beats. These opportunities will provide officers with a sense of ownership of the districts to which they are assigned.

In 2020, the Montgomery Police Department began the data collection and CRIME mapping to track crime and calls throughout the City of Montgomery and its ETJ. It was determined that in the very near future, dividing the city into two quadrants is the best way to distribute call loads. We have been unable to implement this strategy due to lack of staffing and resources. Crime Control and Prevention District funding will provide the resources necessary to help implement this strategy.

Ultimately, the implementation of geographical policing strategies will accomplish more goals than just improving our relations with the community. There is no doubt the implementation of these strategies will also provide a deterrent effect on any criminal element who may think twice at the mere presence of an officer within the area they wish to offend. The number of crimes any agency deters is nearly impossible to put a number on but in theory it will reflect on the overall number of offenses if successfully implemented.

Crime Rate Information

Goal: *Demonstrate proactive, progressive, and preventative policing at all levels of the organization.*

Each month, the Police Department reports the number of serious offenses that have occurred to the Texas Department of Public Safety, via the National Incident Based Reporting System, who then forwards those statistics to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington. These offenses are divided into Group A (most serious offenses) and Group B (less serious offenses). The number of Group A offenses is used by the U.S. Justice Department to calculate a particular city's crime rate to form a basis for comparison between cities of similar population within a particular State.

Whereas, the number of Group A offenses may not be the magnitude of a larger city, for the City of Montgomery the total number of Group A offenses has increased over two years (2021-2022), while remaining the same last year (2023). The influx of populous in the city, the economic growth, and the increased number of those traveling through the city can have direct correlation with the amount of crime any city is dealing with, and Montgomery is no exception. In fact, Montgomery County has been described by some sources as the fastest growing county in the nation. Considering the biggest city in Montgomery County is Conroe, one could draw the conclusion that Conroe is considered a large portion of that growth that is feeding into the city of Montgomery.

It stands to reason with more populous in any given area, a certain amount of criminal activity is to be expected. However, the fact that it is to be expected does not mean the citizens of Montgomery, the

City of Montgomery, and Montgomery Police Department should stand idle and "accept" the crime as it comes into our area either via a gradual increase or a spike in certain criminal activity. The Montgomery Police Department is prepared to fight, prevent, and investigate criminal activity but the need for personnel, training, and equipment is paramount.

The funding will allow us to enhance an already good crime prevention program and promote innovative ideas throughout the organization by exposing all employees to new crime prevention, progressive policing, and proactive policing methods through training opportunities. The Montgomery Crime Control and Prevention District can give us a fighting chance to combat crime by providing additional personnel and resources throughout the organization.

Investigations

Goal: *Enhance crime fighting and investigative abilities and maintain and update technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness.*

The Detective's ability to successfully clear cases is dependent a great deal on the quality of the initial police work done by the first investigating officer and whether a suspect/offender was apprehended shortly after the crime. Having more officers on the street helps keep the officers in their districts and close to their calls, which keeps response times low and the possibility of a criminal arrest high. Other personnel in key positions within the Department help keep those officers on the streets to enable them to handle more important investigative assignments. This method of deploying personnel in the most efficient manner possible promotes a highly effective police presence on the street, with the end result being high-quality police work that gives Detectives what they need to successfully clear their cases.

In the near future we will need to promote an additional full-time investigator added under the Crime Control District this can assist in improving the caseloads. With fewer cases to manage, detectives are able to devote more time to their caseloads, thereby increasing their effectiveness. Additionally, the Montgomery Police Department has not directly investigated narcotics offenses due to lack of staffing. However, we work closely with the Sheriff's Department, DPS, and several other agencies to fight this crime here in the city. Narcotic activity is beginning to have an increased impact on the types of crimes the City of Montgomery is beginning to see our fair share. For example, the Montgomery Police Department has not investigated a homicide in 15 years, however our officers have been first on the scene of two homicides within our ETJ one resulting a violent aggravated assault involving a knife. There is a real increase in domestic violence with overtones directly linked to narcotics usage and distribution. Unfortunately, we are beginning to see what the inability to investigate certain crimes can do to health, safety, and wellbeing of our community.

Crime Control and Prevention District funding will provide the department with much needed staffing to thoroughly investigate crimes which, historically, we have been able to address but by having to take resources from other areas. Also, the additional funding will provide us with the opportunity to hire another investigator and begin specializing our detectives in certain areas such as:

- Homicide Investigations
- Property Crimes Investigations
- Theft
- Burglary
- Crimes Against Persons Investigations

- Child crimes
- Domestic Violence
- Crimes against women
- Fraud Investigations
- Narcotics Investigations
- Computer Forensics Investigations

Our Sergeant Investigator and other staff members have been afforded some opportunities to seek specialized training to properly investigate the above-listed offenses. Often, those who investigate a property crime would then be given a robbery to investigate. Whereas that may seem like a logical way to make use of the manpower in that section, it is not optimal. Most of the above listed crimes require some sort of specialized training which can be costly but, in an effort, to provide the community with a sense of justice after being violated in some fashion, specialized detectives in these areas provide the best possible outcome.

Additionally, the funding would provide the criminal investigations section with relevant equipment which will assist in the apprehension of those who commit crimes in the City of Montgomery. Several of the cases mentioned thus far required the detectives to reach out to agencies which have basic investigative equipment to properly investigate criminal offenses. Telephone forensics has been a relevant investigative tool for many years, and the City of Montgomery has provided the Montgomery Police Department with technology needed for this type of criminal investigation . Our most recent example is a missing person investigation which has required us to outsource our technology needs again. Often when seeking assistance from another agency's technology, you are at the mercy of their cases being priority. We have sought other means of obtaining technology via grants, but sometimes we receive the grant and other times we're denied, so there is no consistency.

Funding

Below are examples of what the Crime Control and Prevention District funding could provide throughout the organization:

- Personnel & Benefits
- Lab fees and supplies
- Training
- Electronic Material (software)
- Equipment
- Technology upgrades
- New technology
- Association Dues
- Miscellaneous Materials
- Fleet needs throughout the organization
- Radio upgrades and maintenance
- Community engagement activities
- New hire expenses
- Accreditation costs

It should be noted that the above list is not meant to be all inclusive and could change based upon the amount awarded via Crime Control and Prevention District funding.