

Proposal – Storefront located on Guadalupe Street where the new Austin “HOT”, Homeless Outreach Team can be stationed.

Local residents, students, business personnel would also be able to stop by to discuss neighborhood issues, report crimes and ask for information.

<http://patch.com/texas/downtownaustin/university-texas-officials-stage-campus-security-meeting-wake-students-murder>

The Houston link below describes the “HOT” team that Chief Acevedo says is being established locally referenced in the article above.

<http://www.houstoncit.org/>

HOT is comprised of one sergeant, two officers, and one mental health professional from The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD. The team helps the homeless with the following:

- Housing
- Social Security cards
- Passports
- Birth certificates
- Shelter referrals
- Medical equipment
- Employment
- Bus fare
- Medical care
- Mental health treatment

Excerpts from articles referenced below:

Communities Buy Into Storefront Police Sites: Law enforcement: Substations offer a low-cost, effective antidote to crime by getting officers out of squad cars and into neighborhoods.

http://articles.latimes.com/1995-07-23/local/me-27032_1_police-officers

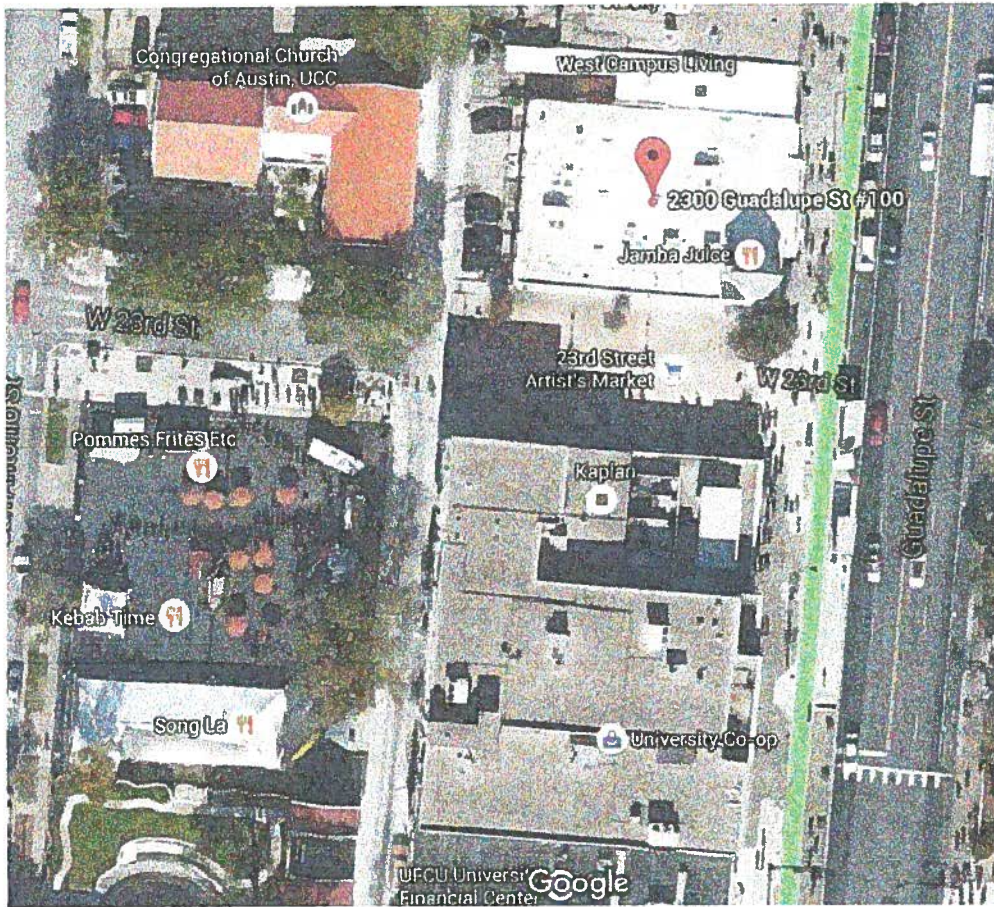
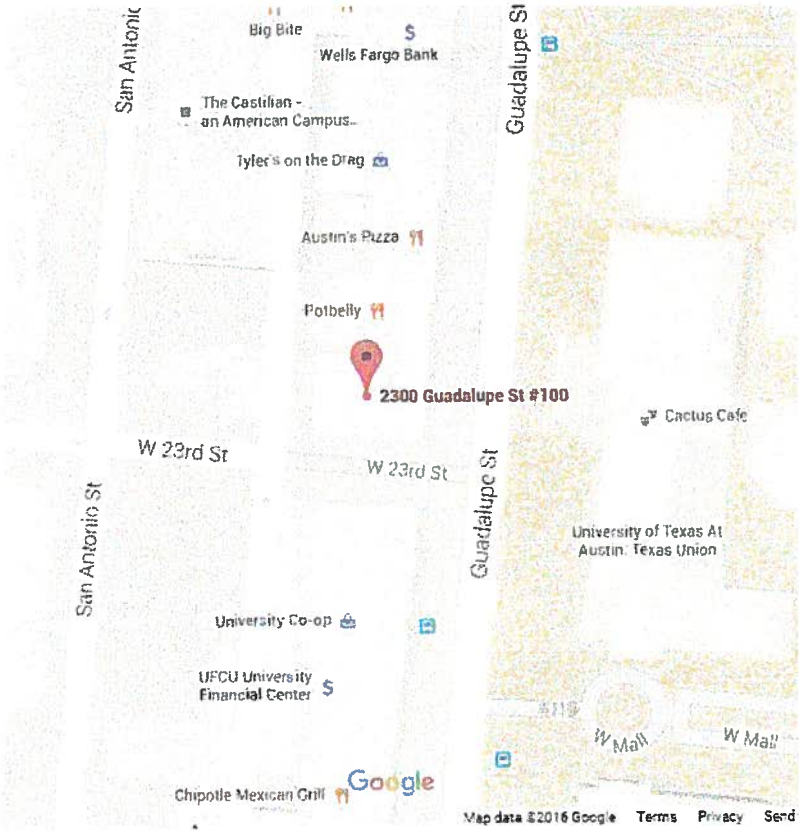
Crime in La Colonia dropped a dramatic 49% within a year of the storefront's opening, Oxnard police spokesman David Keith said. Crime around Oxnard's South Winds storefront dropped 45%. Around the North Fillmore storefront, crime fell 18%.

Center for Problem-Oriented Policing

<http://www.popcenter.org/tools/partnering/4>

Objective: Increase police & business communication for the purpose of developing a positive relationship with the business community.

Business Improvement Districts (BID) security patrols reportedly helped reduce crime in New York City's Grand Central Station by 60 percent.⁴⁴ After a BID was formed in the downtown area of Columbia, South Carolina, overall crime declined by 25 percent, citations for public drinking dropped



— Back to Original Article

Communities Buy Into Storefront Police Sites : Law enforcement: Substations offer a low-cost, effective antidote to crime by getting officers out of squad cars and into neighborhoods.

July 23, 1995 | ANDREW D. BLECHMAN | SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

About a year ago, drug dealers lounged near Shawna Bybee's home off Ventura Avenue. Next door, several squatters set up residence.

But the 33-year-old Bybee was afraid to do anything about it. Why bother, she reasoned, if the police don't even care? The Westside is a rough neighborhood, and from what Bybee could tell, officers only passed through to make quick arrests.

But last year, in response to the concerns of Westside residents, the Ventura Police Department opened a storefront substation on Olive Street. Residents donated the small office, furnished it and even helped staff it.

And what a difference a year and a new policing strategy can make.

Bybee's street is being transformed back into the quiet suburban street it once was. When there is a problem, Bybee and her neighbors are the first to call the police.

"It felt like the police were ignoring us before, so we didn't call in problems," Bybee said. "Now we know they care. They really know the neighborhood. There's more trust than there was before."

Over in east Ventura's Montalvo neighborhood, residents say the same thing.

"The storefront helps a lot," Teresa Carter said. "The neighborhood's quiet now. Life's getting better here."

In Fillmore, too, residents speak of their storefront police station with a pride not often bestowed on police departments.

"It really makes a difference just having them around more," said Leighann Vogel. "It's had a real impact on Fillmore. Every town should have one."

Storefront police substations: They are cheap, effective and popping up all over Ventura County. They are part of a trend in law enforcement called community policing.

The idea is to get officers out of their ominous-looking patrol cars and into the community to talk with residents and work with them instead of on them.

Storefronts are the physical manifestation of the community-policing formula. They keep police in neighborhoods, provide a place for community groups to meet and show commitment to the residents.

Storefronts like the one in the Westside generally are open about 10 hours a day and are staffed by one to four officers. Residents often stop by to discuss neighborhood issues, report crimes and ask for information about topics such as domestic violence, after-school programs and pothole repairs.

The county's first storefront operation was opened by the Oxnard Police Department in 1992 to clean up the La Colonia neighborhood. Now Oxnard has a second storefront site, Ventura has three and is about to open a fourth, Fillmore has one, and the Sheriff's Department hopes soon to open storefront stations in Piru and Oak View.

But Ventura County hasn't jumped on the storefront bandwagon alone.

"It's a national trend," said Jean O'Neil of the National Crime Prevention Council, a nonprofit organization in Washington, D.C. "Where there were a few hundred storefronts around the country a decade ago, there are now several thousand.

"The trend now is to work with residents to solve problems versus simply reacting to calls for service."

Like the residents they serve, police officers have grown to praise community policing.

"There have been too many quick fixes," said Officer Jim Cubitt, who works out of the Westside storefront. "We need to start solving problems. And the best way to do that is to work with the neighborhood."

Sheriff's Deputy Rod Thompson, who supports the creation of an Oak View satellite station, agreed.

"Most of the time we're so busy just bouncing from call to call that the interaction just isn't there," Thompson said. "People see us as uniforms passing by in a patrol car.

"It's definitely preferable to interact more with the people we serve, and deal with their problems before they boil over and get out of hand."

Statistics bear out the officers' enthusiasm.

Crime in La Colonia dropped a dramatic 49% within a year of the storefront's opening, Oxnard police spokesman David Keith said. Crime around Oxnard's South Winds storefront dropped 45%. Around the North Fillmore storefront, crime fell 18%.

The numbers show crime on the rise around the Westside storefront, but officers say that is mainly because residents like Bybee feel more comfortable calling in for help and, consequently, more arrests are made.

By their very nature, storefront stations are becoming lightning rods for community action.

To begin with, storefronts are generally donated spaces, filled with donated furnishings and renovated with donated labor—all from local residents. It is a group project that costs cash-strapped police departments little more than a police officer's salary.

The initial community-police partnership generally leads to other projects, such as a cleanup of several streets in the Westside.

Ramona Street used to be home to midday drug deals, strewn litter and derelicts lounging about. But after a community cleanup day, a block party with social service booths and a job fair, Ramona Street is a different place.

The curbs are painted, the street lights work, trash is picked up and the dealers are gone.

"It was one of the worst streets in town," said Mike DelDosso, of the Westside Council—which was formed with help from the Westside storefront. "Now it's clean and quiet. It was a true partnership between the storefront and residents."

Moorpark is experimenting with a different sort of storefront—one that is staffed with volunteers instead of police officers. Police stop by to use the facility for filing reports and making phone calls, but otherwise the storefronts, called community resource centers, are there to guide residents through the maze of city and county bureaucracy.

The Moorpark resource center is a place where residents can ask questions and get in touch easily with police officers when problems arise. Thousand Oaks hopes to open its own resource center in a few months.

Moorpark residents say they appreciate the increased police presence, even if it isn't regularly scheduled.

"It's nice to see the police around more," said Susan Banks, who works across the street from the resource center. "It makes you feel safer. And it's nice to have a place to go for help."

But for the most part, county storefronts are staffed with police officers and placed in crime-ridden neighborhoods such as Ventura's Westside and La Colonia in Oxnard.

With crime cut in half, La Colonia is a more peaceful place to live. Although some residents complain of officers' heavy-handed tactics—and someone firebombed the new substation before it was completed—almost all agree crime is significantly down because of the storefront.

Police and some residents say the cholos—slang for gang members—don't patrol their territory with semiautomatics in slow-moving cars anymore. Drugs aren't dealt brazenly in the midday sun. And the drunks who lined up along Cooper Road and Hayes Avenue getting into fights and urinating on the curb are gone.

"Our presence is half the battle won right there," Officer Joe Tinoco said. "There's still drug dealing, but not as much as before and not out in the open."

That is something residents readily appreciate.

"I didn't use to let my children play outside," said Gloria Perez, who lives down the street from the storefront. "Now they play by themselves in the front yard."

The officers who work at the storefront find they are able to do more to help the neighborhood because they have the time to listen to residents' concerns and address them.

"We can do stuff that normal patrol officers can't do, like help clean up alleys and paint over graffiti," Tinoco said. "And we can respond to problems more easily because we know the area. We know the hot spots and all the gang members. We know where to locate somebody who is wanted quickly."

The neighborhood is a different place, agreed Manuel Gonzales, 23, who is a former gang member.

"This isn't a big drug area anymore," Gonzales said. "There isn't tagging on the walls anymore and you can leave your car out all night and not worry about it. If there is a problem, we walk over and report it, and they respond immediately."

"And the kids around here are starting to look up to the police officers as role models instead of the cholos."

Gonzales' grandmother, Rosario, remembers how it used to be.

"Before, we felt alone and scared," she said, wearing a black frock and clutching her rosary. "There was a lot of fear. Gang members driving by and yelling slogans, stealing things. But now we feel protected, like someone is watching over us."