
The Laredo, Texas Police Department (LPD) has strongly embraced Community Policing and Crime Reduction as presented under Pillar 4 of the report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The LPD, under the leadership of Chief Raymond E. Garner, has implemented firm policies and adopted practices that advance strong relationships and promote public trust within the community. In garnering public trust, a notable reduction in crime has been attained.

The Police Department’s grounded approach to community policing features a working relationship with the Laredo Chamber of Commerce and its 200-plus members who benefit from two-way information flow in setting the foundation for collaboration among all stakeholders. One of the projects developed through this type of partnership includes the LPD’s Community Relations Unit training of hotel staff in how to recognize suspicious activity and effectively report it. Other similarly styled crime prevention trainings have been conducted with local banks, convenience stores, retail shops and restaurants.

The LPD has established membership and participation in formal community and citizen groups and coalitions such as Crime Stoppers Inc., the Webb County Community Coalition, the Domestic Violence Coalition, the Child Advocacy Coalition, the Stop Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Coalition, the Power of Partnership Coalition, the Homeless Coalition, the Armed Forces Coalition, and local chapters of AARP and MADD. The LPD endeavors to involve all stakeholders in identifying and formulating solutions to policing and community issues.

A notable collaborative effort involves LPD partnering with two local Independent School Districts to form a task force that addresses the needs of at-risk children on the verge of delinquency. The LPD further engages local youth through involvement in a number of successful programs, including 8th Grader of the Month, the Police Explorer Program and the DREAM (Dedication, Respect, Education, Attitude and Motivation) Program, that were designed to develop the students’ problem-solving skills as well as promote their motivation and initiative to be productive citizens.

The City’s elected and police officials jointly appear at community events and town hall meetings to deliver the message that “public safety is paramount,” explain the role of law enforcement and, equally important, stress the public’s obligation to contribute to crime reduction through reporting.

Trademark law enforcement agency collaboration is exemplified through the myriad joint criminal investigations and task forces that involve the LPD and State and federal law enforcement agencies whose jurisdictions converge in the border city of Laredo. The LPD currently participates in task forces with the FBI, DEA, ATF, Homeland Security Investigations, Customs and Border Protection, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program, and the U.S. Marshals Service, and also participates in law enforcement initiatives with the Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission, Texas Auto Theft and Burglary Authority Task Force, and in Operation Stonegarden with the U.S. Border Patrol. These team efforts have an impact on local crime and quality of life and, at the same time, support homeland security.
The LPD Patrol and Directed Patrol Divisions utilize traditional COPS approaches in assigning the same officers to specific geographic areas on a consistent basis. This approach builds rapport between officers and local residents and fosters collaboration. The approach further sharpens the officers’ awareness of offenders and community needs specific to an area. The LPD recognizes that a high percentage of citizens may be potential victims of crime. With that in mind, the Department’s outlook is that citizens are to be treated with patience, understanding and compassion.

Every police officer is expected to be an ambassador for the Department. The capacity of a community to prevent crime is expounded daily via the Department’s social media outlets, reminding the public that while it is not possible to have an officer on every street corner of the city, we do have a citizen on every block. What is encouraged, therefore, is that every citizen should take ownership of the community, through awareness and initiative, to report suspicious activity.

The Police Department takes an intelligence-led approach to crime fighting. The LPD command staff meets weekly with division commanders, Intel Unit analysts, prosecutors and probation officers to discuss crime trends and spikes in crime and to formulate strategies to address identified issues. In 2009 the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) identified Laredo as the nation’s number-one location for auto theft. In 2015, NICB listed Laredo as 104th in their national rankings on auto theft. Despite a 7 percent population increase and serving as the number-one inland port in the nation, Laredo saw a crime reduction of 28.5 percent over the past six years. And 2015 has proven equally successful in crime reduction, with Uniform Crime Reports showing a 12 percent decrease in overall crime in the first 10 months, compared to the previous year.

City leaders characterize Laredo as a safe city and a vibrant city in which citizens and the law enforcement community are working collaboratively to safeguard its prosperity.

For additional information, contact Jesus R. Torres, Assistant Chief of Police, Laredo Police Department, at 956-795-2855 or jtorres@ci.laredo.tx.us.