



POLICE DEPARTMENT
"AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCREDITED AGENCY"

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The Heath Police Department

Strategic Plan

2020 - 2023



Message from the Chief.....	3
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Chapter I Introduction

A. Purpose.....	4
B. Plan Development.....	4
C. Mission Statement.....	4
D. Vision Statement.....	4
E. Today’s Heath Police Department.....	5
F. Looking Ahead.....	6

Chapter II Strategic Plan Organization	6
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Chapter III Goals and Objectives

1 Prepare for Staff Reorganization.....	6
2 Improve the Department Communications Capabilities.....	6
3 Replace Police Vehicles.....	7
4 Establish Responsibility for the Plan’s Implementation.....	8

Appendix

A. 2019 Citizen Survey	
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Message from Chief Dave Haren...

Since the last update of our plan in 2017 much has happened. In November of 2018 the department was re-accredited for the eighth time by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

In 2019 the department upgraded mobile data computers and HD mobile video in all the marked cars. This enhancement has improved video quality and is more functional and mobile. Since the installment of mobile video and audio recording, we have experienced a drop in citizen complaints against officers as well.

Chief John Mason retired in March of 2016. I was selected as Chief of Police through a testing and interview process. I had 23 years plus experience at the Newark Division of Police; and over 30 years of experience in the criminal justice field. It has been an incredible experience working with such dedicated personnel throughout the Heath Police Department and the City of Heath. The community support within the City of Heath has been tremendous. This is a city that cares and supports its first responders.

The city's industrial base continues to increase due to a Community Reinvestment Area tax designation and the expanded industrial area that accompanied it. The special tax status has helped to lure these companies to Heath. The Licking County/Heath/Newark Port Authority works closely with our city government to make Heath a special place for future development.

Employment figures in Licking County are high compared to the state and national averages. In 2016, citizens of the City of Heath approved a tax levy increase to improve safety services and city services in general. In 2017, the police department added two full-time sworn police officers and continued work to improve our delivery of professional police services to the City of Heath.

The addition of personnel is a step in the right direction. All members of the police department have been doing more with less. Personnel within the police department have been reduced over the years by attrition due to budgetary concerns.

Our officers, dispatchers, and civilian personnel do an outstanding job. I say this from personal experience, community comments, and from citizen surveys. Attached you will find our 2019 citizen survey that shows an overwhelming majority of those polled favor the work performed by these men and women.

Respectfully submitted,
David W. Haren
Chief Police

PURPOSE

While a strategic plan is a written document, more importantly it is a process that will allow this agency to stay focused on its priorities and carry out its mission. Without this planning process our efforts, resources, and attention go unchecked in addressing a multitude of issues and our ability to achieve our mission is diminished. An agency that stays focused only on day-to-day concerns becomes totally reactive and tends to stifle creativity and innovation.

A strategic plan is a blueprint that enables an organization to meet the challenges of the future. It is a process by which an organization's vision, goals, and objectives are defined, implemented, evaluated, and updated on a continual basis as a means to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing environment.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

This Strategic Plan began with general concepts and philosophical ideas concerning public safety and concluded with specific yearly tasks to achieve desired goals and objectives. The Mission, Values, and Vision statements indicate the broad range of beliefs, responsibilities, and services of the Department. Goals and objectives more specifically define what needs to take place to meet current and future demands.

Written tasks state as precisely as possible the necessary actions to ensure success. Before any organization can effectively plan for the future, it must first define why it exists and what functions it performs.

The Department's Mission Statement describes our purpose, and our reason for existence. Our mission statement was developed and endorsed by the members of this department. It serves to provide guidance and direction for decision making and set standards for appropriate employee behavior.

MISSION STATEMENT

*“To provide professional law enforcement services in partnership with our community and emphasizing **Integrity, Accountability, and Respect.**”*

The final component of our first steps was the establishment of the vision for the Department. It provides a framework for moving the Department into the future.

VISION STATEMENT

*“To become one of the country’s premier law enforcement agencies through: **Innovation, Technology, Job Satisfaction, & Community Sensitive Policing.**”*

Considering these guiding principles led to the development of the department's goals. This document is our roadmap to reach the long-term goals we've established for ourselves. Each goal lists the required operational objectives that contribute to goal achievement. For each objective are detailed strategies to reach them. We've determined where we are now and where we must be by year's end in 2023.

HEATH POLICE DEPARTMENT TODAY

The Heath Police Department was established in 1963 with a Chief and one full-time patrolman. The Heath Police Department currently has nineteen sworn officers, six full-time dispatchers, and two clerks.

The Heath Police Department is a progressive and service-oriented agency that responds to approximately 16,000 calls for service a year. In July of 1997, the Heath Police Department became an internationally accredited law enforcement agency through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies of Fairfax, Virginia and was re-accredited in 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009 (attained the distinction of CALEA Flagship Agency) 2012, 2015, and 2018.

The Chief of Police now serves as the Patrol Commander and is assisted by three Patrol Sergeants. They and 10 patrol officers provide twenty-four-hour continuous service to the citizens and business community of Heath. The patrol officers of the Heath Police Department also investigate a wide variety of criminal offenses in addition to their traffic enforcement duties.

The Detective Section is staffed by two criminal investigators and supervised by Sergeant Craig Black. They are responsible for all priority one crimes such as homicide, burglary, and armed robbery. In addition to supervising criminal investigations, he is responsible for records and public information.

An Administrative Sergeant currently oversees the Communications Center, the Property and Evidence Function, and serves as the department's Accreditation Manger. One officer serves as the full-time Property and Evidence Officer. In addition to these duties, both the Administrative Sergeant and the Property Officer assist with patrol coverage.

The Communications Center is staffed by six full-time dispatchers who also provide twenty-four-hour phone and radio coverage for the officers, citizens, and business community of the City of Heath.

LOOKING AHEAD THROUGH 2023

The 2010 Census showed Heath's population to be 10,310. A 21% increase from 2000. The 2020 Census is currently underway with a preliminary population estimation for Heath at 10,861 - a 5.3% increase. The housing boom during the first decade of the new millennium brought about much of the population increase that occurred in Heath. In the last several years however, Heath has seen very few homes built and the new neighborhoods that began during the boom have many lots still sitting empty. In the coming years there is no reason to expect such a substantial increase in population to affect the city services. However, the increased industrial presence and the associated jobs will directly impact the draw on city services.

Total call volume has increased from 14,225 in 2017 to 15,699 for 2019. This represents a 10% increase. The increased trend in call volume is expected to continue into the foreseeable future.

STRATEGIC PLAN ORGANIZATION

This plan is simply one of maintaining the excellence in service the department has achieved within our current budget. With adding the two full time officers to replace positions vacated years ago, the goal to improve services and also reduce the workload and overtime demands on the entire department is underway.

There is no exact timetable associated with each goal, but rather, a commitment to reach full implementation by December 31, 2023. Administration of this plan is the responsibility of the Chief of Police.

Due to the new levee passage there is a new source of revenue realized so that we may continue the high performance and best customer-service driven police department we have been. Any realization of increased revenues from new industry will be offset by the tax status granted. It will take years beyond this plan to see any significant boost from these new additions to the local economy.

GOAL 1: Patrol staff

OBJECTIVE: Add two police officers to the Patrol Division

After attaining a staffing level of 20 sworn officers in 2019, the department is now dealing with replacing both a currently vacant position, and an upcoming vacancy due to retirement.

GOAL 2: Improve the Department's technology

OBJECTIVE:

The department has both computer-aided-dispatch (CAD) and a records management system (RMS). Both products are from Emergitech. These products are functional and have served our officers and community well. Unfortunately, the products are an end-of-life software. That means the products will not improve and the parent company will only keep them functional. Central Square is the most recent purchaser of the company and pledge to maintain the function of the Emergitech products.

Our goal is to replace both our CAD and RMS systems with systems that are more functional with our advancements in technology. Additionally, connectivity and information sharing with surrounding agencies is a possibility with today's technology. Our goal is to find a system that maximizes the information at the officer's finger tips.

GOAL 3: Replace Police Vehicles (Reduce Maintenance Costs)

OBJECTIVE: Replace police vehicles on rotation plan

The current plan is to replace two cars each year. In 2013 the Mayor approved the replacement of a total of three vehicles, two regular patrol cars. In 2017 the fleet was expanded with the addition of Cruiser 10. Adhering to the 2 vehicle replacement plan will limit cruiser down time and repair costs and maintain high quality vehicles for emergency responses.

- Adhere to current vehicle replacement schedule
- Replace 2 patrol vehicles in 2020
- Replace 2 patrol vehicles and 1 unmarked vehicle in 2021

GOAL 4: Facilities Improvement

OBJECTIVE: Build a pole building for evidence and storage.

The previous storage area was a barn that was determined to be structurally unsound. It was removed in 2018. The goal is to build a pole building to serve as evidence storage and garage space. One section of the pole building will be secure evidence storage for long term evidence and bulk items. The building will have cameras and door controls installed to maintain security and accountability.

With the closure of the Holding Facility, the interior of the police building needs renovated and repurposed to maximize the space available.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Chief is responsible to oversee the implementation of the plan. He will be assisted in this endeavor by the administrative sergeant. The Chief will delegate tasks to others as necessary, but the completion or failure of the plan is upon him.

All reviews of the plan and any revisions will be conducted by the Chief during implementation.

2019 Citizen Survey

Overview

The 2019 Citizen Survey was mailed out to 750 utility customers in March 2017. The surveys were then reviewed in July 2019. The Heath Police Department mails out similar surveys every three years as part of the re-accreditation process for the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). According to research, many Americans are more likely to complete surveys they receive via mail as opposed to online surveys. Of the 750 surveys mailed out, 66 were returned (8.8%).

Demographics

The survey is completed anonymously. The only demographics information asked for is the length of residency in the city (see chart 1), and the type of residency (apartment, townhouse, condominium, or single-family residence). Of the 66 returns, 58 listed their home as a single-family residence, 3 as apartment, 3 as condominium, and 2 as “other”.

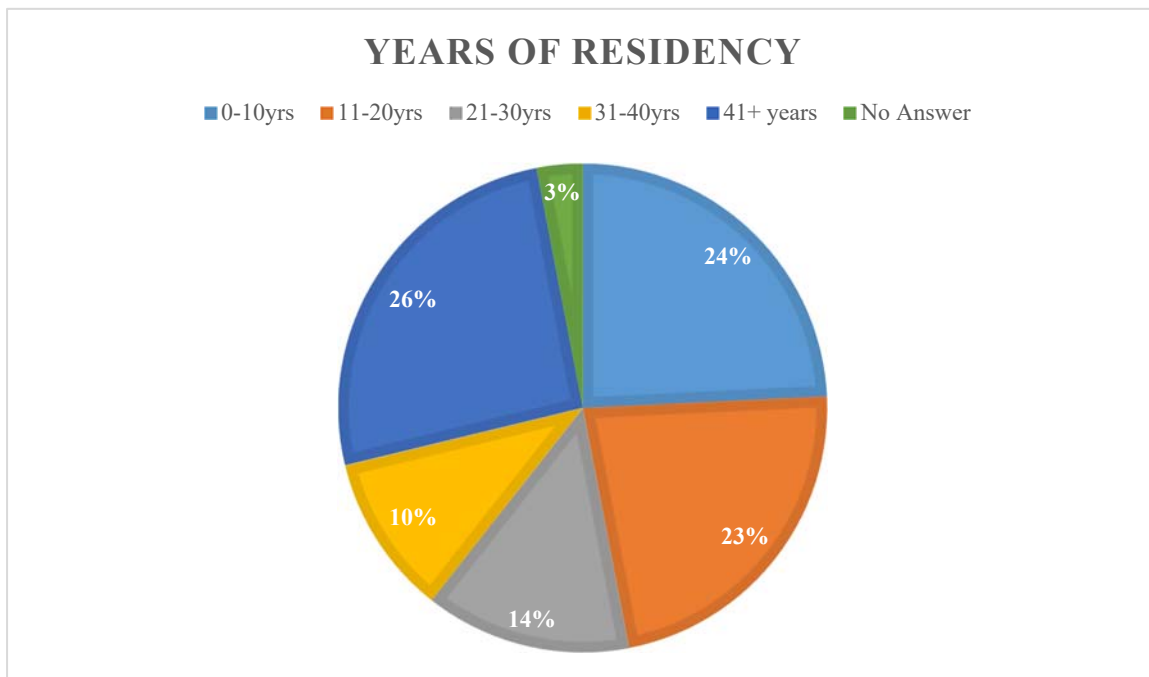


Chart 1

Citizen Opinion of Officers

The first section of questions from the survey focused on citizens' observations and/or interactions with officers and their perceived performance of those officers. Citizens graded the interaction based on competency, demeanor, fairness, courtesy, and overall performance.

The questions are followed by a grading scale of 1-5 with 1 being "poor" and 5 being excellent (Graph 1). It should be noted that not all residents completed this section as it only pertained to those who had actual contact with Heath Police Officers. From those that provided an opinion, their OVERALL experience is listed as follows:

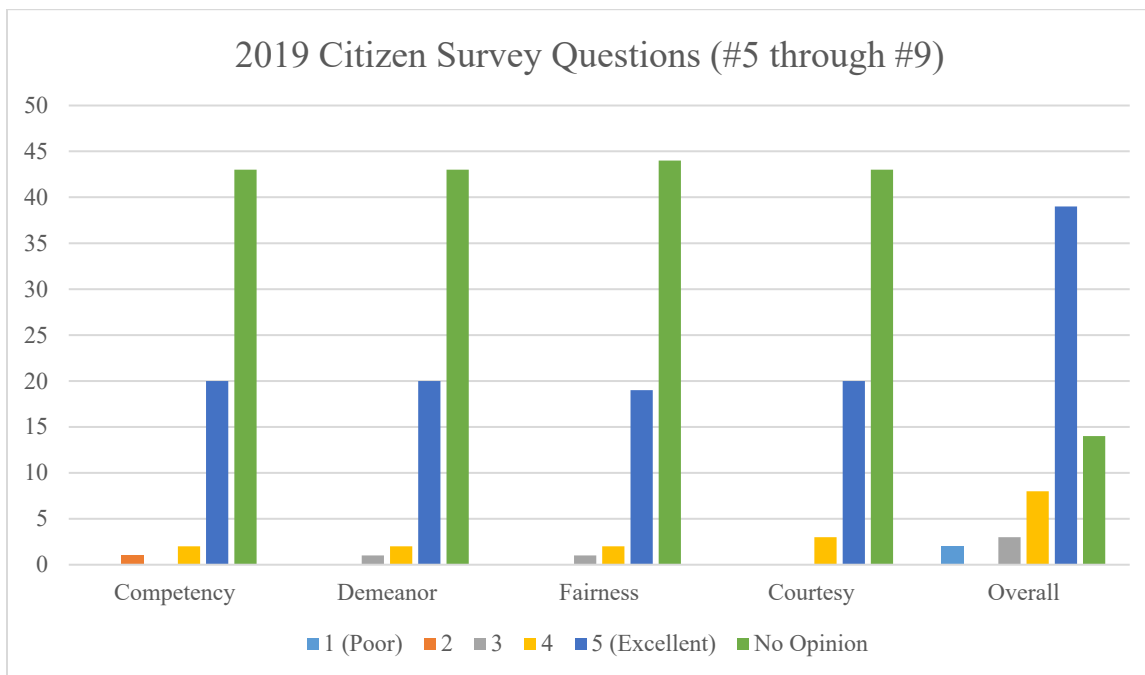
Rate of 1: 3.8% Poor

Rate of 2: 0%

Rate of 3: 5.7%

Rate of 4: 15.4%

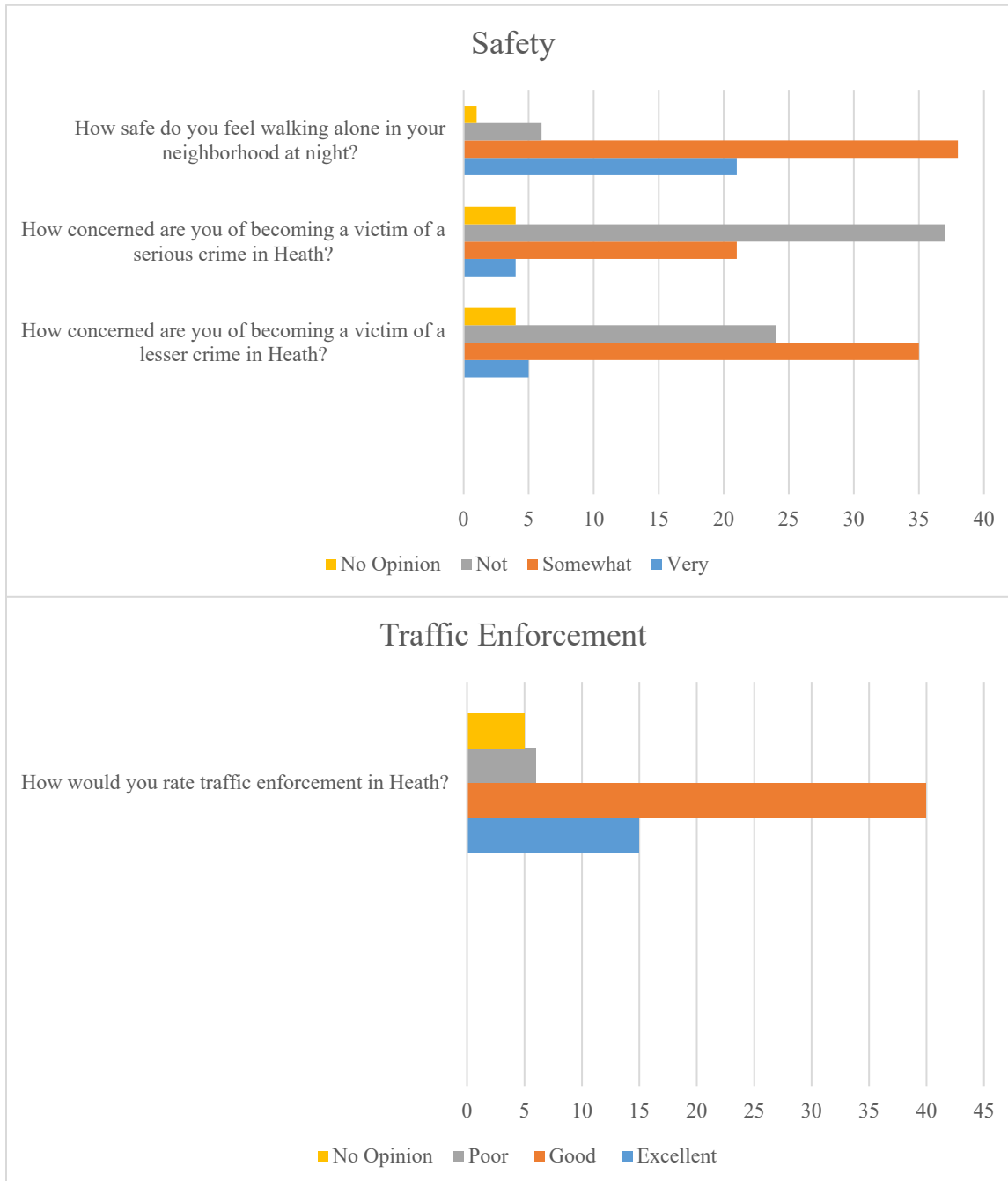
Rate of 5: 75.1% Excellent



Graph 1

Citizen Opinions of Safety

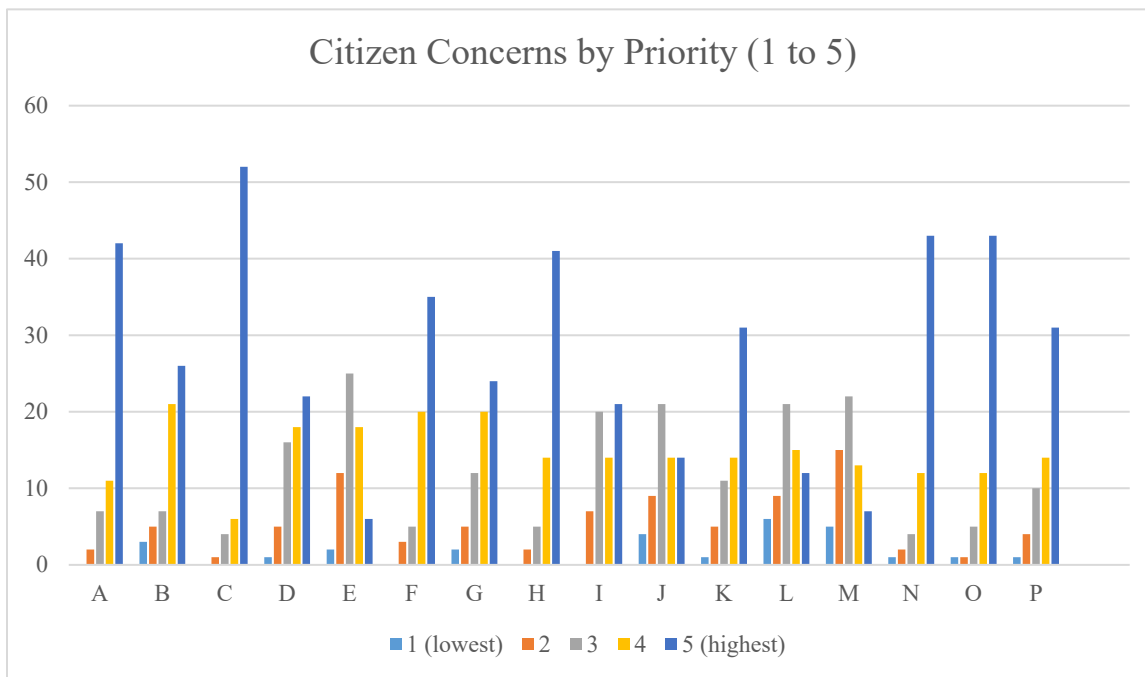
The next series of questions focused on the resident’s feelings of safety within the city and critique of police traffic enforcement services. After reviewing the responses, the results show a vast majority satisfied with current police traffic enforcement and feel safe within their communities.



Police Services

The final question of the survey asked the residents to prioritize a list of 16 topics they believed the police department should focus its attention on by order of importance. The priority rating was listed 1 (low importance) to 5 (high importance). The survey results (graph 2) provided the following order by priority:

1. Responding to crimes in progress or that have just occurred.
2. Investigating and discouraging illegal drug activity in the city.
2. Discouraging gang activity in the city.
4. Providing 24-hour crime prevention/patrol services to all areas of the city.
5. Enforcement of drunk driving laws.
6. Investigation of felony crimes.
7. Discouraging sales to and use of alcoholic beverages to minors.
7. Providing drug abuse and other education to the students in the Heath school system.
9. Notify citizens of the potential for criminal activity.
10. Enforcement of traffic laws (i.e. speeding, red lights, etc)
11. Responding to property crimes for the purpose of initiating an investigation.
12. Discouraging automobile accidents in general.
13. Enforcement of parking laws (i.e. handicap, fire lanes, etc)
14. Enforcing noise-related ordinances (i.e. barking dogs, loud cars/music, etc)
15. Mediating neighborhood disputes.
16. Investigation of lesser (misdemeanor) crimes in general.



Graph 2 (see legend below)

Legend for Graph 2
A. Providing 24-hour crime prevention/patrol services to all areas of the city
B. Notify citizens of the potential for criminal activity
C. Responding to crimes in progress or that have just occurred
D. Responding to property crimes for the purpose of initiating an investigation
E. Investigation of lesser (misdemeanor) crimes in general
F. Investigation of felony crimes
G. Enforcement of traffic laws (i.e. speeding, red lights, etc)
H. Enforcement of drunk driving laws
I. Discouraging automobile accidents in general
J. Enforcement of parking laws (i.e. handicap, fire lanes, etc)
K. Discouraging sales to and use of alcoholic beverages to minors
L. Enforcing noise-related ordinances (i.e. barking dogs, loud cars/music, etc)
M. Mediating neighborhood disputes
N. Investigating and discouraging illegal drug activity in the city
O. Discouraging gang activity in the city
P. Providing drug abuse and other education to the students in the Heath school system

Conclusion

The 2019 Citizen Survey mailed to 750 residents yielded an 8.8% return (66). According to the National Research Center, Inc. the average response rate for a citizen survey is between 20-30%¹, with mailed survey responses coming in second only to in-person surveys. The 2017 Citizen Survey yielded only 56 returns of the 500 mailed out, or 11%. The Heath Police department should work on ways to gain greater engagement from the residents before the next survey is conducted in 2020. A larger sample size will help to create a more accurate picture of the job the police department is doing as well as the wishes and thoughts of the community. The survey returns that were received showed the community has given the Heath Police Department positive feedback overall and appears to be happy with the services provided them by the department. The citizens have had positive interactions with the officers and appear to have confidence in their abilities to do the job. Citizens feel safe in their neighborhoods and in the city overall. Citizens are currently satisfied with the department's traffic enforcement across the city.

Overall, the citizens of Heath want the police services mainly devoted to responding to active or recent crimes, providing around-the-clock crime prevention/patrols, and enforcing laws as it pertains to drug and alcohol related offenses. The issues citizens seemed less concerned with were parking, noise-related disturbances, and overall mediation of neighborhood disputes.

A few of the citizens chose to take the opportunity to provide additional suggestions/recommendations:

1. Overall, the comments centered around ramped up traffic enforcement, specifically speeding and red-light violations (main thoroughfares and neighborhoods).
2. Possibility of satellite office/s integrated in the community as opposed to just the police station.
3. The hiring of more officers to better patrol the city.

¹ *<https://www.n-r-c.com/whats-the-average-response-rate-for-a-citizen-survey/>

4. Many took the time to applaud and commend the work the Heath Police Department is currently doing.

These suggestions/recommendations are well taken and should be explored within logistical and budgetary constraints.