



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

April 17, 2023 | 5:30 PM
Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Square Drive NE
Blaine, MN 55449

AGENDA

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

In accordance with the provisions of Section 3.01 of the Blaine City Charter, a Council Workshop meeting is scheduled for the following purpose:

1. Call to Order

2. New Business

2.1. 2023-138 Closed Session Pursuant to MN Statute 13D.05(2)(a)(2) - Personnel Matter
Sponsors: Michelle Wolfe, City Manager

2.2. 2023-129 Northtown Presentation Damon Farber
Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, City Planner

2.3. 2023-118 Northtown Retail District Report
Sponsors: Teresa Barnes, Project Engineer

3. Other Business

3.1. 2023-144 Staff Updates
Sponsors: Michelle Wolfe, City Manager

4. Adjournment



City of Blaine Staff Report

File Number:

Agenda Date	Status
April 17, 2023	

In Control	File Type
City Council	Report

New Business -

Agenda Item # 2.2

Northtown Presentation Damon Farber

Background

Damon Farber, the consultant that prepared the master plan for Northtown will present on how the vision was created, public involvement and implementation.

Staff Recommendation

Not Applicable

Questions for Council

Not Applicable

Attachment List

None



City of Blaine Staff Report

File Number:

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April 17, 2023	

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City Council	Report

New Business - Brian Podany, Safety Services Manager/Police Chief

Agenda Item # 2.3

Northtown Retail District Report

Background

Chief Podany will present the Northtown Retail District Report.

Staff Recommendation

Questions for Council

Attachment List

None



City of Blaine Police Department



NORTHTOWN RETAIL DISTRICT CALLS FOR SERVICE STUDY FEBRUARY 2023

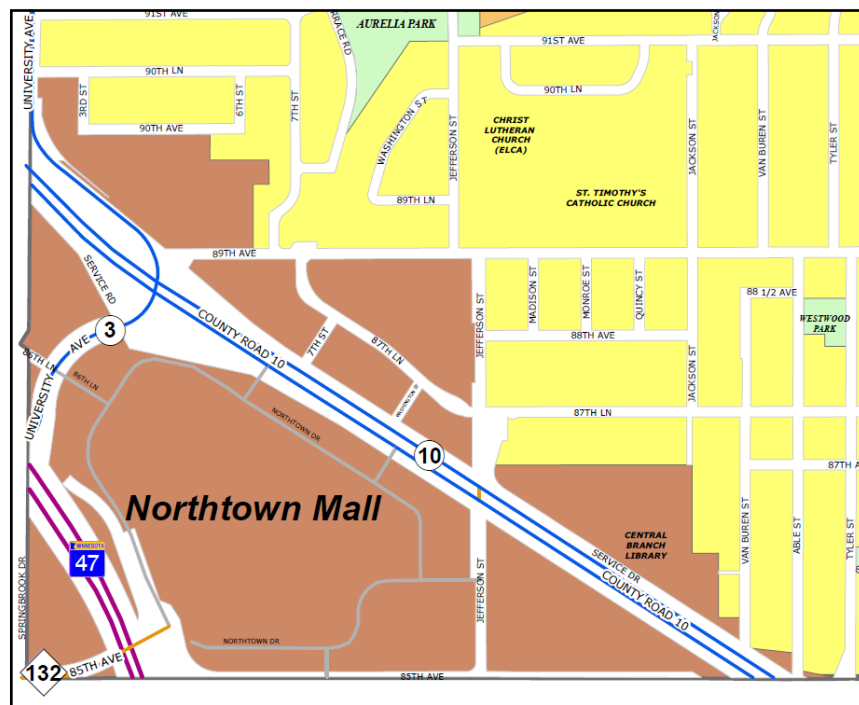
Prepared by:
Crime Analyst Rebecca Florhaug and
Police Captain Matt Carlson

Northtown Retail District Calls for Service Study February 2023

Background

In June 2016, the Blaine Police Department added a sixth patrol district to the already established five patrol districts in Blaine based on data that demonstrated a disproportionately high call volume for the relatively small geographical area represented by the retail district identified as the Greater Northtown Retail Area. It was called “Patrol District 2” and two dedicated officers were assigned this area during retail hours defined as 10AM – 10PM. These dedicated officers were tasked with handling the high call volumes generated by the densely populated retail area, leaving the adjacent patrol district officers more time to focus on residential patrol duties. See “Patrol District 2” map below depicted in brown shading. The goals that were stated for Patrol District 2 at its inception were “reduce crime, especially robberies; address calls-for-service so as to minimize the impact to Area 4 and other areas in the City of Blaine; create and foster a positive environment for visitors and citizens and assist businesses in Area 2 to minimize their victimization.”

**Patrol District 2
Greater Northtown Retail Area
Brown Shaded Area**



Officers have expanded the scope of their duties to include their investigations into Organized Retail Theft Crime Organizations and addressing the significant increase in the presence of homelessness and vagrancy that contributes to the perception of blight in the area.

Methodology

In November 2022, I was tasked with conducting an analysis on calls for service and self-initiated activity involving the Greater Northtown Retail District in response to a widely held perception of significantly higher call volumes with incidents involving crimes of violence and quality of life compared with recent years. Data from 2019, 2020, and 2021, was collected in order to make a full-year direct comparison from year to year and data from the first half of 2019-2022 was collected and analyzed in order to include as much of 2022 that we had available at the start of the study. This was done to make the comparison as valid as possible and to observe any trends that might exist over the course of the first six months of a 4-year period. For both periods, our crime analyst separated the data by Calls for Service and Self-initiated Activity. That is an important distinction because the volume of Calls for Service cannot be controlled while Self-Initiated Activity is completely discretionary.

Observations

Full Year Data Three-year comparison 2019-2021

- **Calls for Service decreased** in the following categories:
 - Assault
 - Crim Sex Conduct
 - Drugs
 - Fights
 - Forgery
 - Robbery
 - Threat
 - Vehicle Theft
 - Assists to Other Agency
 - Escort
 - Harassment
 - Ordinance
 - Property
 - Suicide
 - Trespassing
- **Calls for Service increased** in the following categories:
 - Vandalism
 - Warrants
 - Parking
 - Public Assists
 - Burglar Alarms
 - Welfare Checks
- **Self-initiated Activities** significantly increased in the following:
 - Homelessness/Vagrancy (109, 158, 188 respectively)
 - Traffic Stops (473, 522, 609 respectively)

Half-year Data (January-June)
Four-year comparison
2019-2022

- **Calls for Service** decreased in the following categories:
 - Drugs
 - DWI
 - Fights
 - Forgery
 - Civil
 - Ordinance
 - Public Assist
 - Suicide
 - Fraud
 - Trespassing
- **Calls for Service** increased in a demonstrable spike in the following categories:
 - Assault (8, 8, 6, 17 respectively)
 - Robbery (3, 3, 0, 5 respectively)
 - Threats (7, 7, 11, 12 respectively)
 - Vandalism (5, 5, 6, 16 respectively)
 - Property (19, 25, 18, 31 respectively)
- **Self-initiated Activity** increased significantly in the following:
 - Traffic Stops (244, 234, 300, 508 respectively)

Conclusions

- Homelessness and police contacts with vagrants has increased over the three-year period 2019-2021 but showed a marked decrease in police contacts in the first half of 2022 compared with the first half of 2019-2021.
- Robbery crimes showed a three-year decline from 2019-2021 but showed a spike in 2022 with 5. The numbers are small and difficult to draw any conclusions from them (3-year average = 6) and (4-year average in first 6 months = 5.66)
- Assaults showed a decline in the 3-years 2019-2021 but had a spike of 17 in 2022 when looking at the first 6 months of 2019-2022 compared with 8, 8 and 6 in the first 6 months of the previous 3 years.
- There was a significant increase in traffic stops over the study period as we encouraged our officers to be more visually present in the area to discourage criminal activity.
- In 2018-2019 the Blaine Police Department hosted multi-agency homeless outreach initiatives with the goal of providing resources to those in our community affected by homelessness. While the events were very successful and demonstrated our compassion for the less fortunate, many of the attendees remained in our community and have found the greater Northtown area to be a hospitable place to be on the streets. We offer the many resources available through the county, but they are most often declined. Panhandling, vagrancy, and other activity that is associated with

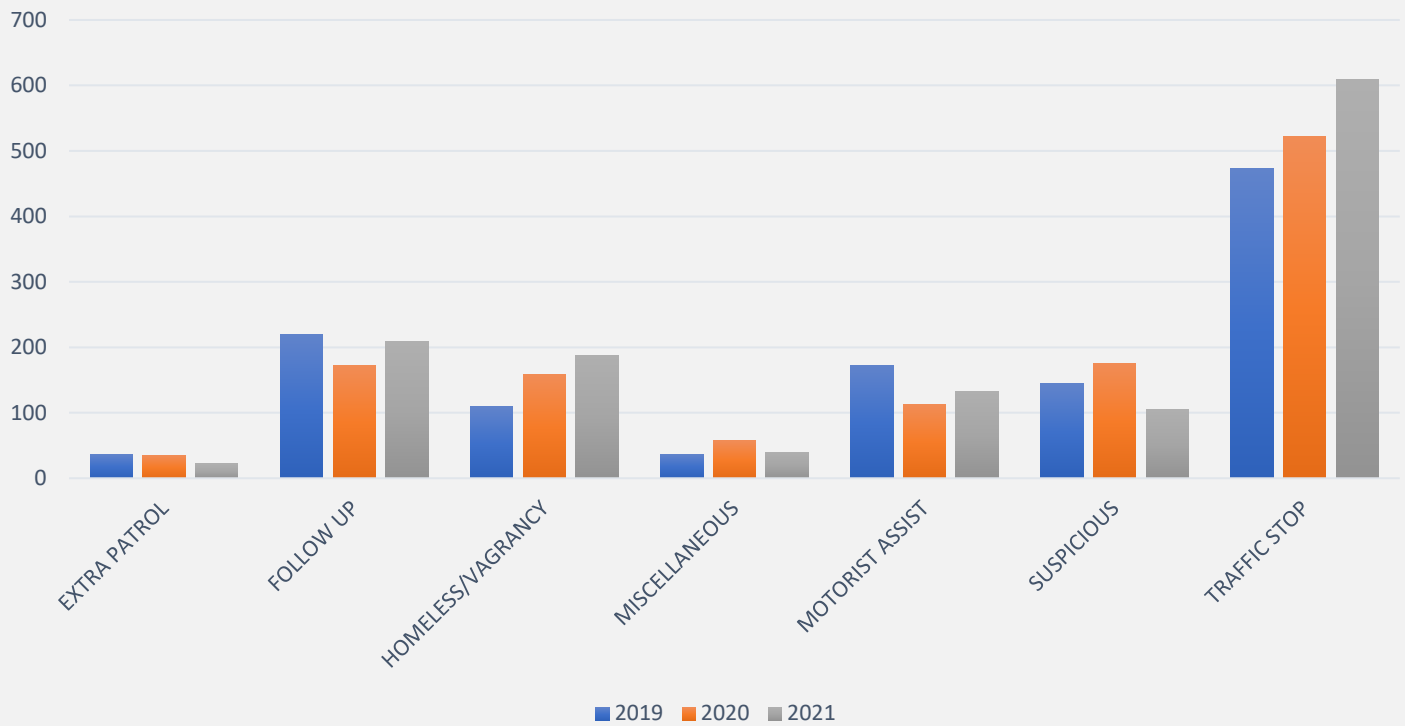
homelessness are not necessarily unlawful. It is difficult for the police to lawfully eradicate these behaviors from the community. Our officers are dedicated to providing a safe environment for the visitors to the Northtown Retail area but are limited in our abilities to combat homelessness and the effects it has on our community.

Recommendations

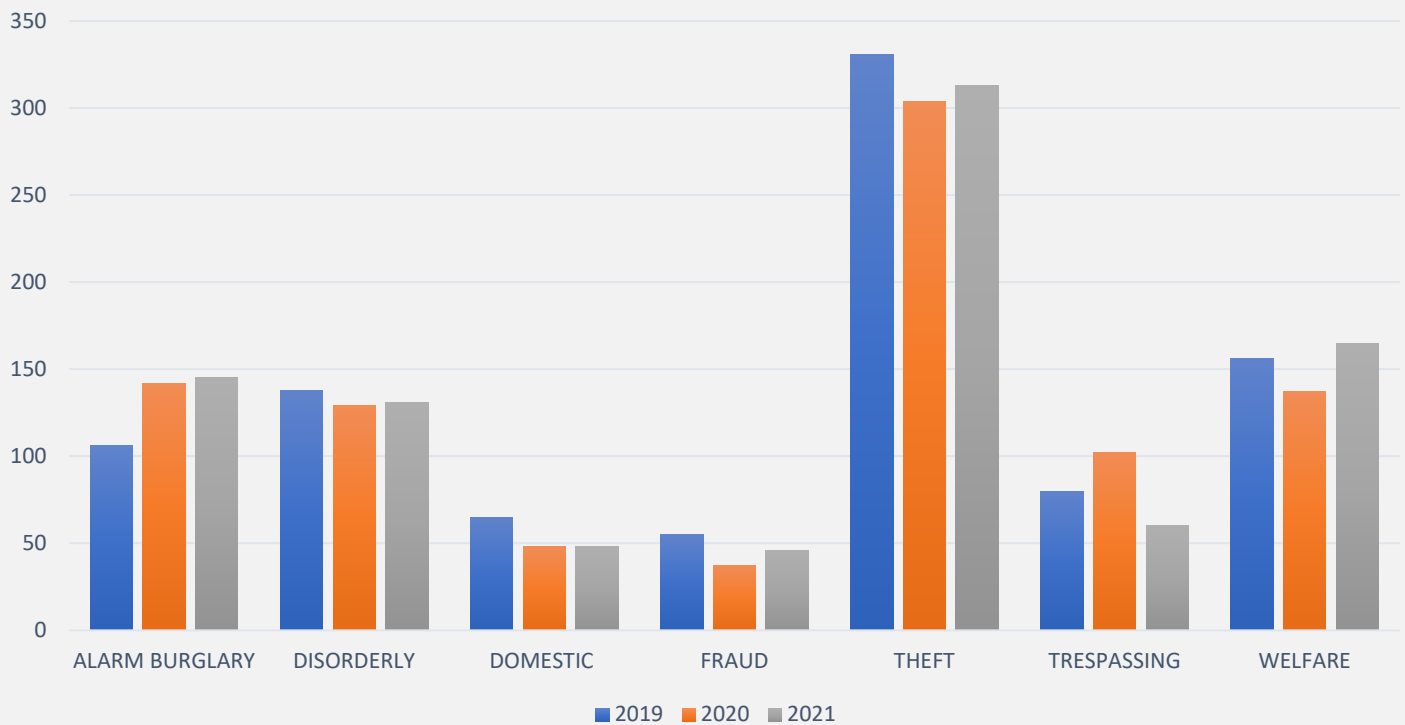
- The police department currently has a 5-year plan in place that provides for the hiring of an additional 2 officers each year through 2024. This meets the demands of a steady increase in population and calls for service while maintaining a proportionate amount of unallocated time to conduct proactive self-initiated activity. We believe that the current coverage scheme along with the creation of the power shift that resulted from the 2020 Staffing Analysis that coincides with the retail shift hours is satisfactory to meet the demands of the retail district. Any perception of a sharp increase in call volume or a shift in more violent calls is likely related to a small number of high-profile cases. These cases may draw attention as they are uncommon, but they are statistically insignificant to justify any change in the manner the police department operates in the Greater Northtown Retail Area. No change to police operations is recommended at this time.
- Northtown Security is virtually non-existent. The proactive work they used to do with regular interior patrols and exterior patrols by vehicle with frequent interactions with visitors has completely stopped. We should try to persuade mall ownership/management that a lack of internal security is contributing to the decline of the mall. Given the number of visitors to the mall (if this was a Blaine event that required permitting, we would require officers or security presence). There is no security presence until 1500 hours, then they staff one or two, who also double as maintenance workers. It used to be a team of security officers. There is no proactive work or camera monitoring, and bad actors are allowed to move around without friction. Mall manager, Melissa Winther, is working on corporate to get in-house security back up and running but no timeline has been set. We are working on providing data to help support Winther in her attempts to persuade ownership that internal security is needed.
- Camera Trailer deployment
- License plate readers and significant security camera upgrade to the entire property (city or mall investment?)
- DOG Unit deployed to supplement Retail Unit
- Retail Officers to conduct meeting with shopkeepers in the mall, with complete roster of who attended and who didn't so those that are missed can be met with individually. The meeting would be an introductory meeting to the retail officers, and it could cover what's needed from them to satisfy prosecution requirements.
- Partner with Fridley and Coon Rapids on sharing intel on homeless and vagrants
- Focus Power Shift time in Area 2 to supplement retail unit officers at Northtown

- Additional walk throughs (what mall security used to do)
- Officer initiated trespasses like what's been done at Rainbow Village
- Have Officers Jake Green and Mike Vollman work combined details, then supplement with power shift officers on their payback days. Have their combined days determined by data from Crime Analyst, Rebecca Florhaug.
- Reserve officers working mall (eyes and ears only).
- The mall has no merchants or anchor businesses that are a draw to citizens of Blaine. People will drive right past Northtown to go to Rosedale or Ridgedale. Need additional commercial investment.
- Have two additional officers assigned to the retail unit.

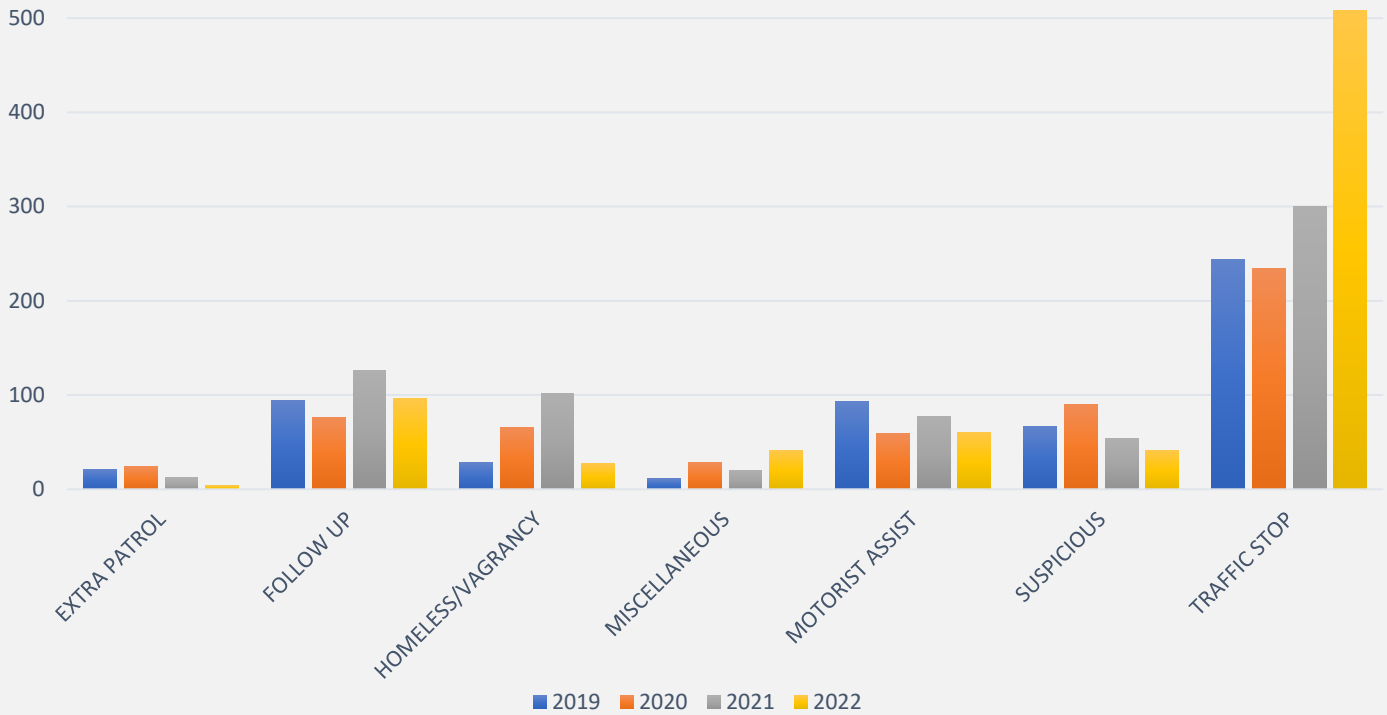
Self-Initiated Activity (Full Year)



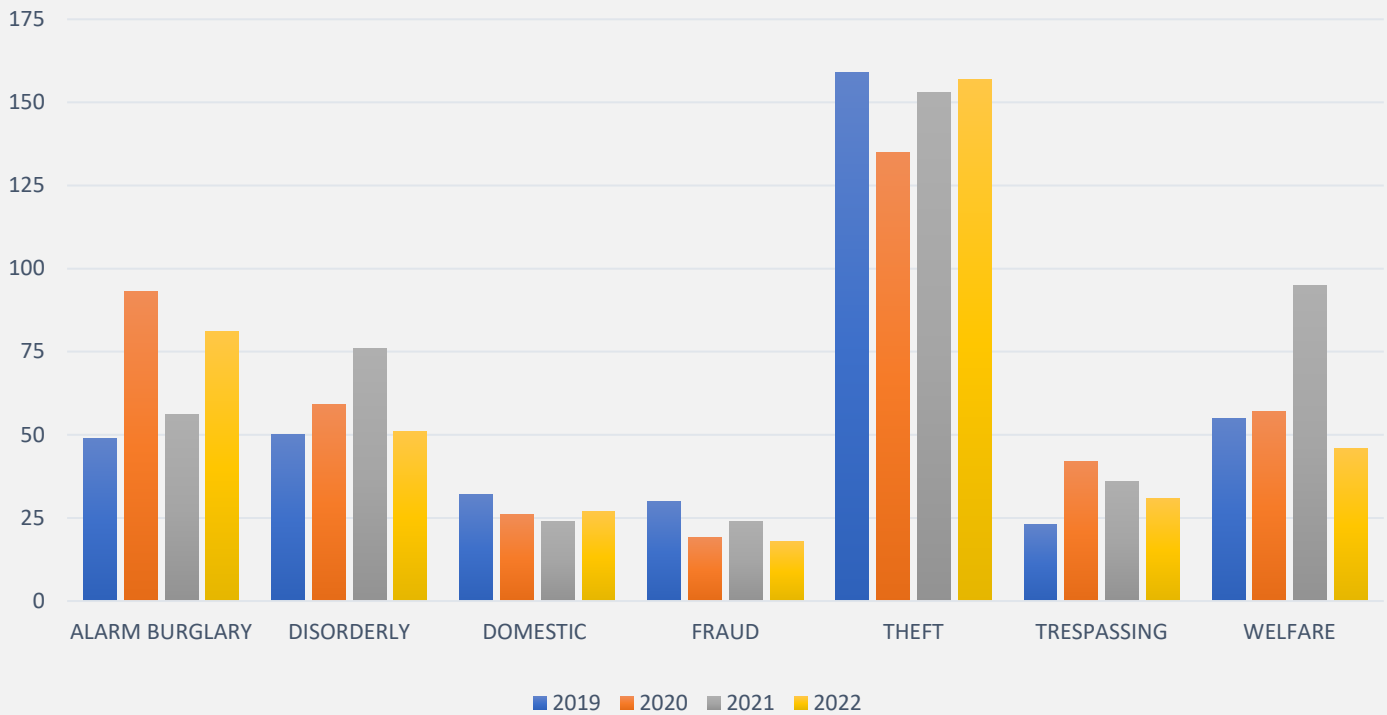
Calls for Service (Full Year)

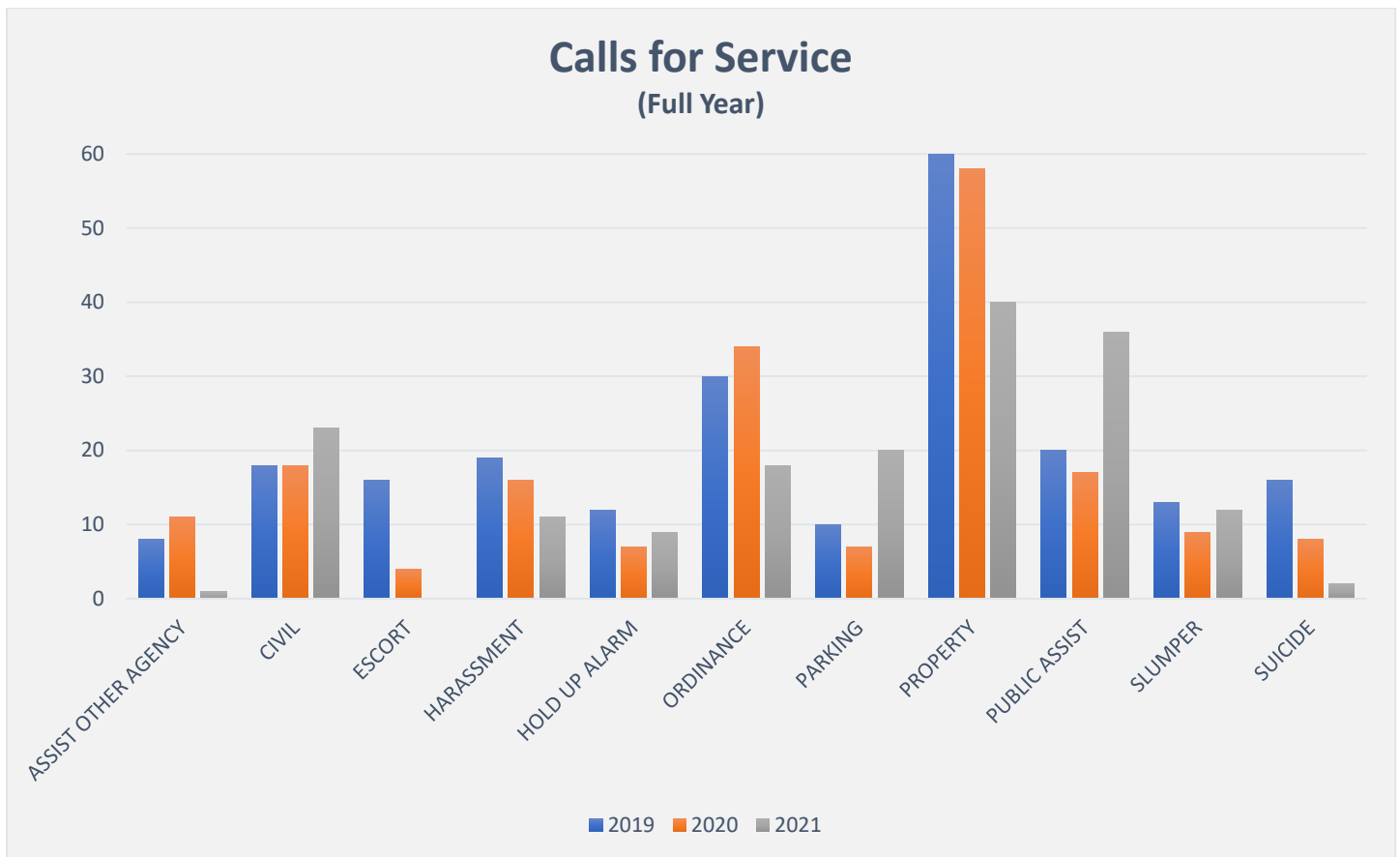
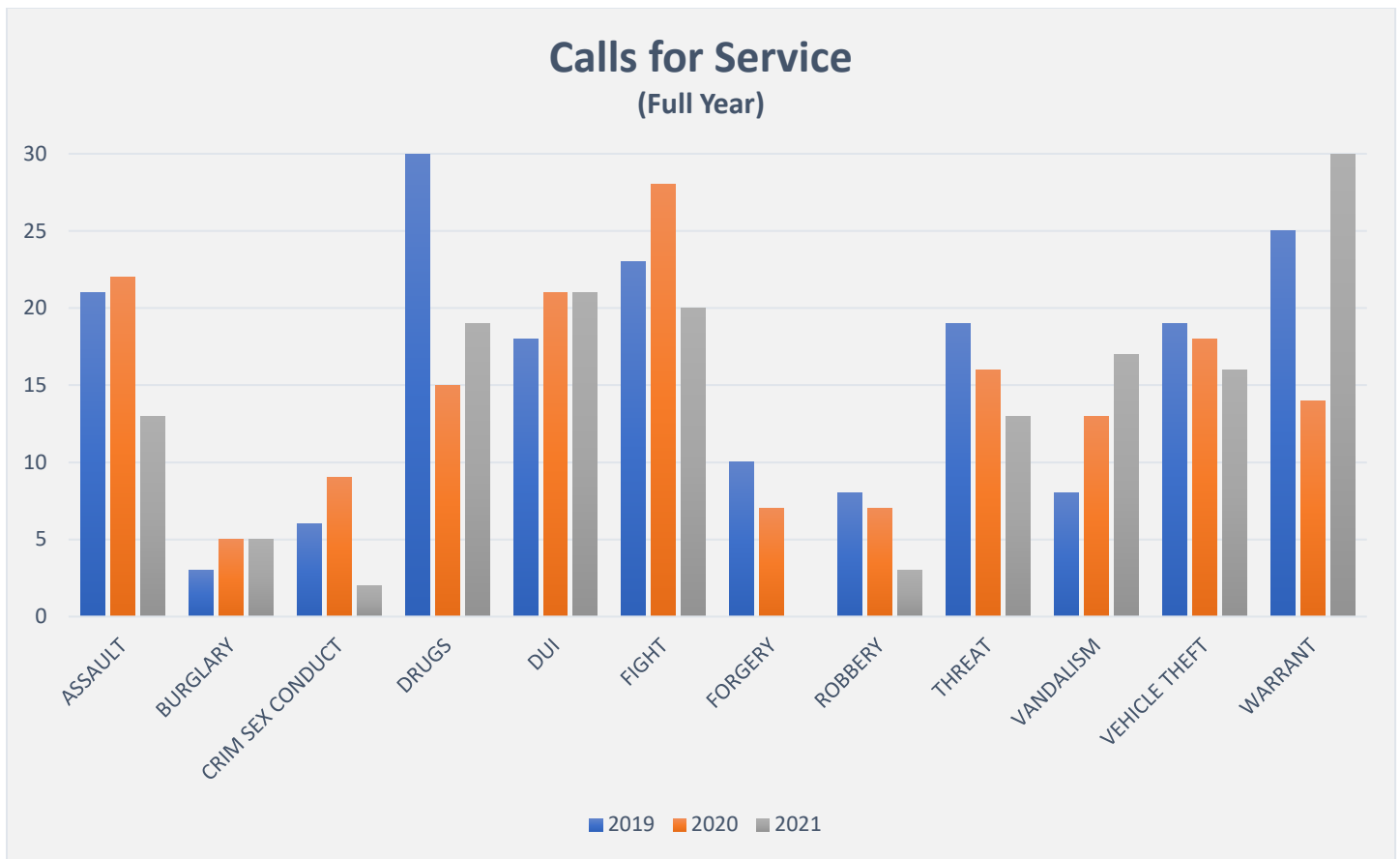


Self-Initiated Activity (January - June)



Calls for Service (January - June)

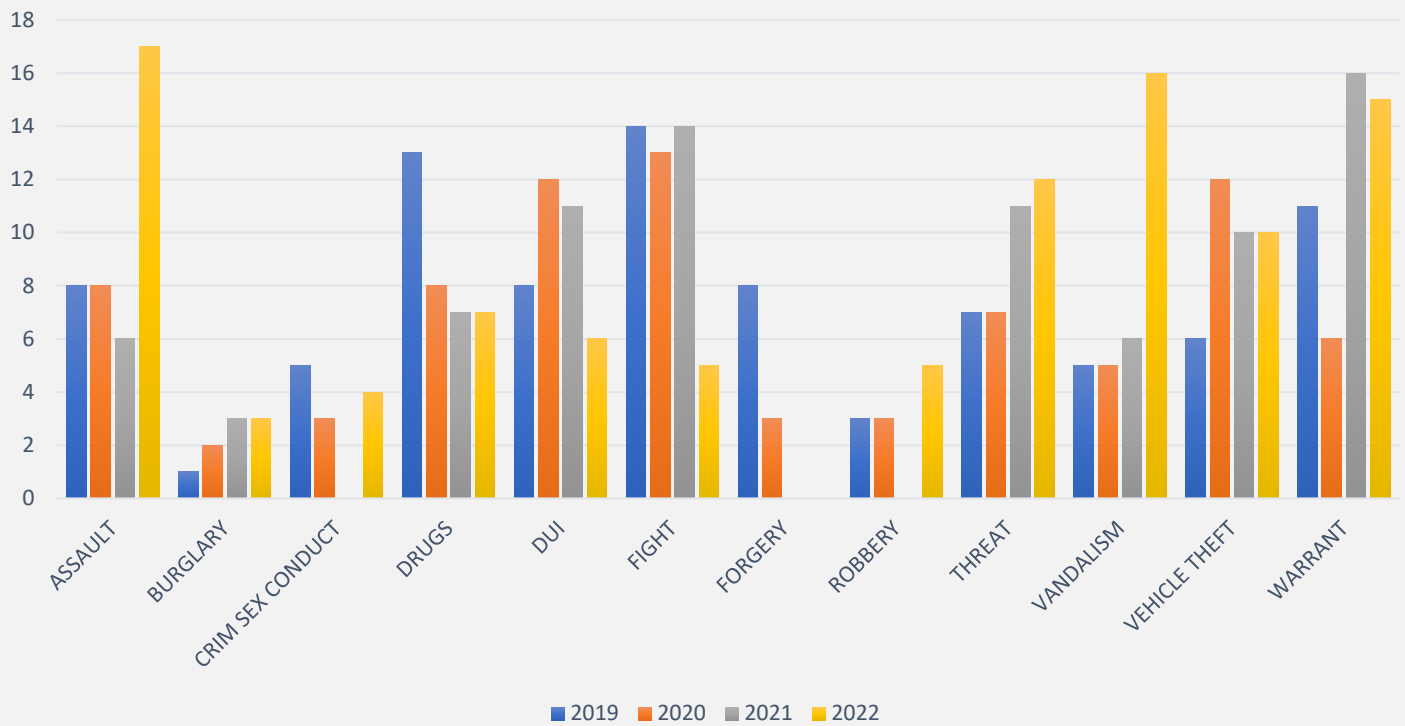




**For the purposes of this graph, the category "Property" includes all calls for service labeled as "Property", "Abandoned Property", "Recovered Stolen Property" and "Stolen Property".*

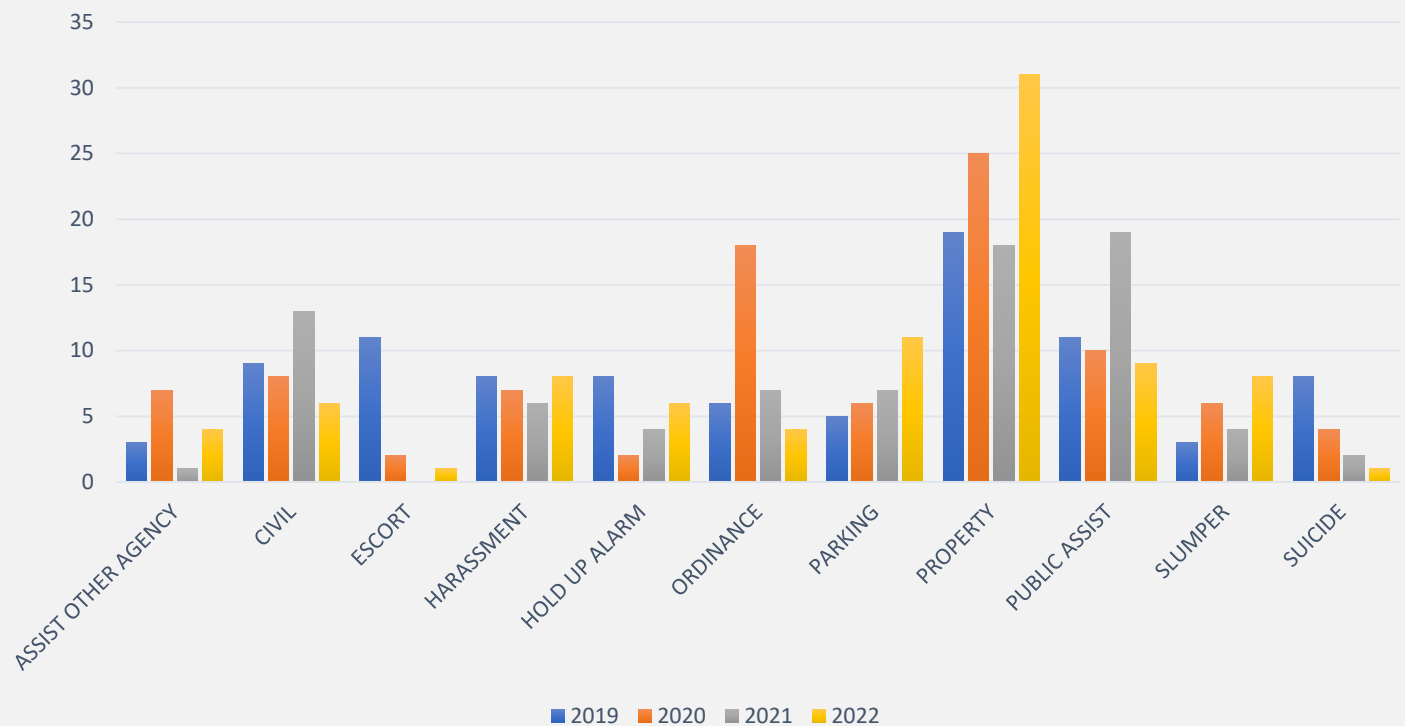
Calls for Service

(January - June)



Calls for Service

(January - June)



**For the purposes of this graph, the category "Property" includes all calls for service labeled as "Property", "Abandoned Property", "Recovered Stolen Property" and "Stolen Property".*

**The categories highlighted in yellow are not represented on the graphs as they are not issues specific to Northtown as a geographic location.*

***For the purposes of clarity, all incidents labeled as “in Progress” were combined with the correlating non “in progress” category and were represented as a single category on the graphs. For example, “Theft” and “Theft in Progress” calls were combined to the single category labeled “Theft”.*

****All calls for service categorized as “Unknown”, “Other”, “Miscellaneous”, “Miscellaneous Officer” and “Info” were combined into one category labeled “Miscellaneous”.*

*****All calls for service categorized as “Miscellaneous” or “Suspicious” were manually reviewed to identify calls related to homelessness. A new category was created called “Homeless/Vagrancy” to portray these incidents.*



City of Blaine Staff Report

File Number:

Agenda Date

April 17, 2023

Status

In Control

City Council

File Type

Workshop Item

Other Business - Michelle Wolfe, City Manager

Agenda Item # 3.1

Staff Updates

Background

Staff will provide updates on the following topics:

- Well interference
- Council policies
- TH65 funding
- Miscellaneous

Staff Recommendation

Questions for Council

Attachment List

None