

CUP OF JOE

Student cafe helps teach life skills.

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Gwinnett Daily Post

\$2.00

SUNDAY January 25, 2009

www.gwinnettdaily.com

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File Photo

A gateway monument sits on the corner of Old Norcross Road and Pleasant Hill Road. Leaders with the Gwinnett Place CID are pleased that virtually all crime categories showed a decline in 2008.

Crime on decline

Gwinnett Place CID sees drop in most categories

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DULUTH — Criminals found a commercial nucleus of Gwinnett a bad place for business in 2008, according to data released this past week.

The Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District, one of three such districts in the county, tallied a

double-digit decline in most major crime categories from the previous year. The most substantial change came in commercial burglaries, which nose-dived by 35 percent, Gwinnett police data shows.

It's welcome news for an organiza-

tion of 187 commercial property owners bent on keeping their loot, and their patrons, safeguarded.

Though its residential count is zero, the CID hosted as many as 9 million visitors last year alone, said Joe Allen, the district's executive director.

"We've had our peaks and valleys, and hopefully (crime) will continue on

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Crime: 'We see this as an area where the glass is half-full'

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a downward push," Allen said. "We're trying to remind people that we see this as an area where the glass is half-full, not half-empty."

Established in 2005, the Gwinnett Place CID encompasses a chunk of Duluth bordered by Steve Reynolds Boulevard to the south, Old Norcross Road and Satellite Boulevard to the west and Club Drive on the east. Its purpose is to beautify and promote that area while upping safety.

Piggybacking a trend visible across much of Gwinnett in 2008, the CID's crime levels dropped in several key areas, Allen said, including:

- Vehicle break-ins, down 27 percent;
- Crimes against persons, 16 percent;
- Vehicle thefts, 6 percent;

Allen attributes the drop to a steadfast "broken window" approach, the theory that quickly fixing small infrastructure problems, such as broken windows or graffiti, helps to thwart an environment conducive to major crimes.

A strengthened relationship with the Gwinnett County Police Department's Central Precinct has also helped, he said.

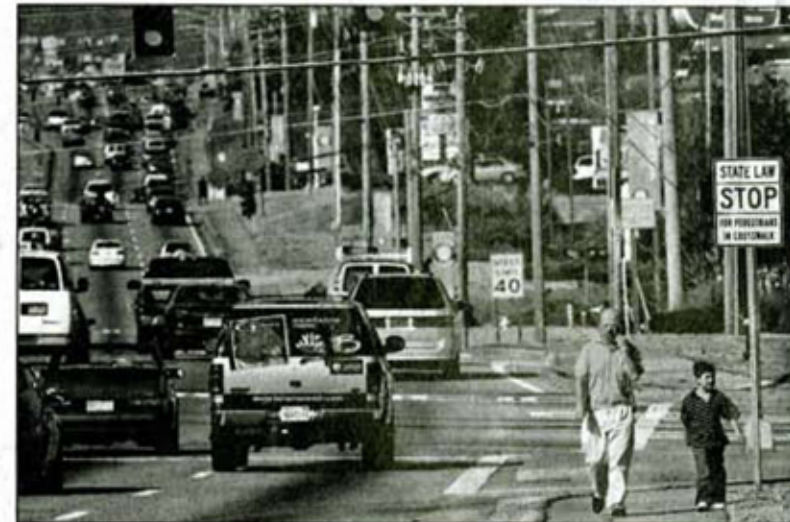
"Many of businesses hire off-duty police officers and security," he said. "That also acts as a force to push away any criminal element."

Gwinnett police Major Bart Hulse, commander of Central Precinct, chalks the statistical crime drop to "proactive and innovative" enforcement.

"(Diligent policing) contributed to the drop of major crimes," Hulse said in a statement. "We will continue to address any criminal problem areas that may arise."

For all the statistical positives, Allen said two deadly shootings in recent months in the area have caught the attention of the CID's directors board. But the sporadic incidents haven't marred the district's reputation as a safe business center, he said.

"It's something the board is looking and continues to review," Allen said.



File Photo

A man and a young child walk along Pleasant Hill Road in Duluth. Leaders with Gwinnett Place CID are pleased that virtually all crime categories showed a decline in 2008.