

STAFF REPORT

Date: December 4, 2024

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Jackie Bryant, Interim City Manager

Subject: Staff Report (For Possible Action): Presentation and discussion regarding the current state of the Reno Police Department including operational challenges, implementation of study results, and current focuses and strategic shifts in downtown, and potential direction to staff regarding future opportunities for increased policing including an additional focus on downtown.

From: Kathryn Nance, Chief of Police

Department: Reno Police Department

Summary:

The Reno Police Department (RPD) plays a critical role in maintaining public safety and enhancing the quality of life in Reno. Staff is providing a comprehensive update on the department's current operational challenges, strategic shifts, and downtown policing initiatives. Despite notable achievements, such as updating policies, restructuring leadership, and improving community engagement, RPD faces persistent staffing shortages, outdated equipment, and operational inefficiencies exacerbated by Reno's growing population and increasing demands for service.

To address these challenges, RPD has made many innovative strides including specific downtown initiatives which have been implemented to enhance safety and public confidence and completion of a study with Matrix Consulting Group to evaluate patrol staffing and deployment, revealing a need for 24 additional officers to meet proactive policing targets and mitigate workload inequalities across districts. However, additional funding and policy direction are essential to sustain these efforts and expand community policing.

Staff seeks Council's guidance on strengthening downtown policing, addressing resource limitations, updating ordinances, and prioritizing actions to align RPD operations with the city's strategic plan for public safety and quality of life improvements.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

Public Safety

Previous Council Action:

None

Background:

The Reno Police Department (RPD) is dedicated to maintaining public safety and enhancing the quality of life in Reno, Nevada. The department's mission is to safeguard the community through proactive policing, community engagement, and a commitment to excellence. At the time of the FY25 budget adoption, RPD was composed of 452 full time equivalents (FTEs) including 361 sworn personnel and 91 professional staff (6 of these FTEs will not be actualized until January 2025). Key Functions and services include:

- **Patrol Operations:** RPD officers conduct regular patrols to deter crime, respond to emergencies, and engage with residents.
- **Investigative Services:** The department handles investigations related to various crimes, including property offenses, violent crimes, and narcotics.
- **Community Engagement:** RPD emphasizes building strong relationships with the community through programs like neighborhood watch, youth outreach, and public safety education.
- **Specialized Units:** The department includes specialized units such as SWAT, K-9, and traffic enforcement to address specific public safety needs.

In January 2023, Kathryn Nance was appointed as the City of Reno Police Chief. When appointed, she inherited many challenges within the department including:

- Lack of updated policies
- No current policing model or vision for the department
- Low staffing numbers for both sworn and professional staff members
- Consistent exceptions to the policies, allowing for perceived favoritism, lack of accountability, and low morale
- Outdated or unavailable technology that is used in current policing models throughout the nation
- Expired or antiquated equipment, including expired SWAT helmets for all SWAT team members, limited functioning Bearcat, no Mobile Command Post or Unmanned Aerial Systems
- Dysfunctional command structure and assignment of sworn personnel

Despite these challenges, the department has achieved many strategic shifts including:

- Issued more than 30 new or updated policies
- Increased leadership and executive level training

- Restructured organizational chart
- Contract with Matrix consulting to evaluate patrol deployment and needs.
- Reorganization of the records section resulting in up-to-date National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) information and increased responses and returns to public records request
- Creation of the DEEDS (Directed Engagement and Enforcement Deployment Strategy) resulted in a 66% average increase for officers-initiated call for service and a significant decrease in citizen initiated calls for service in the focus areas (28% in Paradise Park NS, 18% for the first month of downtown)
- Creation and revamp of the downtown walking team and bike team, resulting in and increase in arrests, citations, and citizen contacts.
- Substantial increase in cooperation of other city departments, to ensure the best service is provided to the entire city
- Increased data metrics and reporting. of incidents to ensure we are in compliance with NIBRS and ensure the proper deployment of resources
- Implemented a special assignment policy to strategically fill positions and ensure growth and opportunity throughout the department

Discussion:

Today, staff is providing an update on the current state of RPD, including a discussion on operational challenges, implementation of study results, and current focuses and strategic shifts in downtown. Staff is also seeking direction on future opportunities for increased policing including an additional focus on downtown.

Current Staffing

RPD is composed of five divisions. An overview of each division is as follows:

- Patrol Services Division: Respond to calls for service, in their assigned areas, take reports for crimes and incidents, proactively conduct enforcement and engagement as time permits
- Investigative Services Division: Crime investigations and specialized units
- Support Services Division: Training and workforce development, Intelligence services and records
- Community Services Division: Traffic section, which is responsible for enforcement, accident response, public safety education, Special Events, Community Action and outreach, downtown walking and bike teams
- Fiscal Services Division: budget, grants, supply and accounts payable

Although the department has 452 FTEs, it is currently operating at 4% sworn vacancy rate (16 sworn officers). In addition to vacancies, in 2009, staffing was at an all-time high of 383 sworn officers. Due to the economic downturn, many of these positions were cut. RPD has slowly

increased the authorized sworn strength to 361, which is 22 sworn officers below the prior authorized number. During this time, the population of Reno has grown substantially. Staffing in RPD has not recovered since that reduction in force, and the staffing challenges are often highlighted in the multiple studies that have been conducted.

Call Volume and Case Load

RPD was dispatched to 65,122 calls and initiated 74,041 calls in 2023 and has responded to 124,880 calls (dispatched to and initiated) in 2024. Table 2 shows an overview of call statistics by type for 2023 and 2024:

Table 2: RPD Call Volume				
Year	Calls Entered	Calls Dispatched	Officer Initiated	Total
2023	187,518	74,041	65,122	326,681
2024 (YTD)	168,527	65,414	59,466	293,407

In addition to responding to calls, RPD is routed over 4,200 cases to detectives since January 2024.

With a focus on optimizing resource allocation, improving proactive time, reducing response times, and increasing efficiency, RPD contracted with Matrix Consulting Group to evaluate patrol operations and staffing. The findings revealed that current patrol staffing is insufficient, with a deficit of 24 officers needed to achieve the target of 45% proactive time across districts. Additionally, significant workload inequalities exist between districts and beats, leading to inconsistent service levels. The current shift schedules do not align with workload demands, particularly during peak times, reducing operational efficiency and the geographic deployment structure, consisting of 31 beats, is unmanageable with available staffing, resulting in service level disparities.

Immediate action items from this study include:

- Redesign of police beats/geographic deployment to fit the recommendations
- Adoption of an optimized shift schedule
- Conduct further evaluation of shifts and schedules with the labor unions to bring us in alignment with the Matrix study

Future action items that could be achieved with additional funding include:

- Expansion of community service officers
- Increase in patrol staffing

Downtown Efforts

In response to current events, RPD is focusing additional efforts in the downtown core and Midtown. Key initiatives include:

- Community policing strategies.
- Increased patrols and targeted operations.
- Partnerships with local businesses and organizations.
- Efforts to improve community confidence.
- Public perception of safety.

To strengthen community engagement and ensure effective policing, additional resources have been dedicated to downtown Reno as of November 20, 2024 including:

- Dedicated Downtown Resources: Officers are assigned to specific areas to foster community involvement and address local concerns directly.
 - Community Action and Outreach Team (CAO)
 - Personnel: 4 Officers and 1 Sergeant
 - Schedule: Monday – Thursday, day shift hours
 - Mobile Engagement Team (MET)
 - Walking Team Personnel: 5 officers and 1 sergeant
 - Walking Team Schedule: Monday – Thursday, dayshift hours
 - Bike Team Personnel: 6 Officers and 1 Sergeant
 - Bike Team Schedule: Wednesday – Saturday, 2:00 PM to midnight
 - Supplemental Patrols
 - Traffic Officers: 2 officers with varying schedules
 - Central Patrol Officers: On-call 24/7 to respond to service calls.

We will continue to monitor and respond to the needs of downtown and midtown and measure success via:

- Crime rate trends.
- Public meetings with businesses and community members
- Response time improvements.
- Outcomes from specific downtown programs.
- Ongoing evaluation processes.

Staff is seeking guidance from the Council on potential opportunities to strengthen policing efforts, with an additional focus on improving downtown safety and quality of life. Key areas for consideration include:

- Funding and Staffing
 - Securing additional funding for new positions
 - Expanding the use of Reserve Officers
 - Increasing deployment of Community Service Officers (CSOs)
 - Allocating resources for overtime to support enhanced coverage
- Policy Direction for Downtown

- Establishing clear priorities and strategies to address downtown-specific challenges
 - Updated Ordinances
- Reviewing and updating ordinances to address issues
 - Loitering
 - Noise disturbances
 - Camping, sitting, and lying in public spaces

Financial Implications:

No financial implications at this time. Addressing RPD's staffing and resource challenges will require increased funding.

Legal Implications:

Legal review completed for compliance with City procedures and Nevada law.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Council provides direction on potential opportunities to strengthen policing efforts, with an additional focus on improving downtown safety and quality of life.

Proposed Motion:

I move to direct staff to execute the future opportunities for increased policing including an additional focus on downtown as discussed by Council today.

Attachments: