

# SAFER COMMUNITIES.

**THANKS TO A COMBINATION OF FULLY ENGAGED LEADERSHIP, ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, THE STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS OF SOUTH BEND ARE ENJOYING THEIR SAFEST LEVELS IN AT LEAST 40 YEARS.**



## WHAT IS A SAFE COMMUNITY?

In its simplest terms, public safety can be defined as a community free from crime, violence and accidental injury. Based on funding devoted to police and fire services in municipal budgets

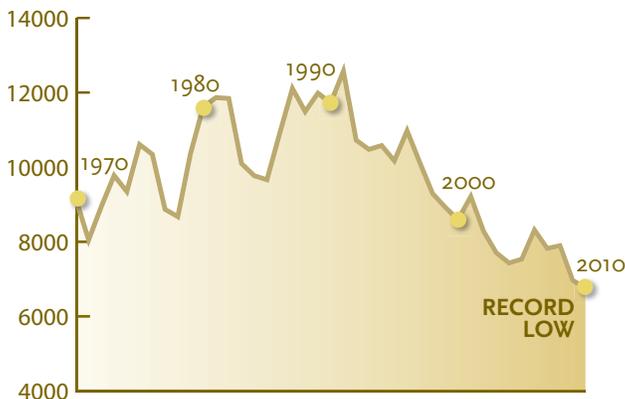
nationwide, the No. 1 priority of any city is public safety. Without a safe community, municipalities cannot promote economic development, develop park facilities or recreation programs, and enhance the quality of life.

In both 2009 and 2010, reported incidents of major crimes reached their lowest levels in South Bend in at least 40 years. The positive trend included record lows in four categories, including murders, nonresidential burglaries, larcenies and motor-vehicle thefts.

South Bend is the safest it has been in a generation.

The following chart tracks the incidence of major crimes in South Bend since 1970.

## Reported Crimes in South Bend Reach Generational Low Point



## A NUMBER OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO MAKING SOUTH BEND A SAFE COMMUNITY

**Vigilant Citizens:** South Bend residents are active in Neighborhood Crime Watches and other forms of Community-Oriented Policing. These efforts help improve the department's professionalism with outreach programs like the Citizen's Police Academy, Volunteers in Police Service, Civilian Volunteer Officers and Business Watch.

**Expanded Police Capacity:** South Bend has more officers per 10,000 residents than all but three Indiana police forces. The federal stimulus and a new Public Safety Tax have enabled the Police Department to bring its number of sworn officers to full strength at 260. More than 80 percent of the City's 2011 General Fund budget is devoted to public safety — Police, Fire and the 911 Communications Center — compared with 75 percent as recently as 2009.

**Visible Police Presence:** The expanded capacity has brought about the addition of a Street Crimes Unit, which can be deployed to target specific crimes, such as residential burglaries. Police also are considering the addition of a traffic enforcement unit. Being at full strength also means that the midnight shift will be fully staffed. Police Bicycle Patrols were activated in 1990 to increase police officers' visibility, especially among pedestrians.

**Use Of Technology:** In 2010, police implemented an Automated Fingerprint Identification System for palm print recognition, expanding the department's existing technical capacity to match fingerprints to federal databases. The technology led to an arrest that helped solve 24 burglaries in the city. An Integrated Ballistic Identification System reads the "fingerprints" of bullets and casings to help solve cases.

**Innovative Strategies:** Working with private contributors, police became a member of the national Police Athletic League. Police officers serve as mentors to youth through sports such as boxing, swimming and tennis, with mentorship in reading, arts and study components.



# SAFER COMMUNITIES.



## POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

South Bend Police tap into federal, state and community resources to help keep South Bend a safe community.

- Weed and Seed is a federal initiative administered with collaborative partnerships among government and community entities. Its two-pronged approach “weeds” out criminal activity through law enforcement and community policing while “seeding” community-building activities through prevention, intervention and treatment, and neighborhood restoration. South Bend received official recognition in 2002 for its first Weed and Seed site on the west side. A second site on the northwest side was recognized and received its first year of funding in 2008.
- The South Bend Area Crime Stoppers is composed of dedicated community representatives and a professional police coordinator. With the cooperation of local media, Crime Stoppers provides a method for local law enforcement to receive information on crimes, thus increasing felony arrests.
- Senior education programs help protect the elderly against fraud, scams and identity theft. Other efforts include pill drops to collect and safely dispose of old or unused prescription medications, the distribution of cell phones for emergency 911 use, and Project Lifesaver to locate and identify seniors who may wander and become lost.

## CRIME FIGURES – PERCEPTION VS. REALITY

Numerous stories in the national media have recently been reporting a startling phenomenon: While actual crime rates have decreased in cities, the perception of crime has increased.

For example, National Public Radio featured a segment on a Gallup poll showing that 75 percent of people perceive crime is increasing nationally, despite three successive years of significant drops in crime.

Similarly, a recent editorial in The Washington Post quoted FBI statistics indicating that in the first half of 2009, “as unemployment skyrocketed, reported murders, forcible rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults decreased by 4.4 percent compared with the first half of 2008.”

The statistical reality flies in the face of conventional wisdom, which suggests that crime rates tend to go up in times of economic hardship.

Experts say that crime-reporting practices by the media may be partly responsible for the disparity.

Crime has become easier to cover with technology, and 24-hour news organizations demand more stories.

“Crime gets amplified,” James Alan Fox, a criminologist at Northeastern University in Boston, told the Chicago Tribune. “People’s perceptions of crime [are] totally out of touch with the statistical reality.”

Disproportionate reporting of crime in the media results in elevated levels of fear and perceptions of personal risk, researchers say.

## FOCUS ON WHAT WORKS

In the face of prevalent pessimism about public safety, it is especially important to focus on initiatives that are working well. South Bend offers a number of successful models for improving public safety that have received widespread recognition for their effectiveness. They are already in place — and they work.

