

Kent Police Department Community Project



Prepared by:

Sara Wood – Research and Development Analyst

Stacy Judd – Community Education Coordinator

John Pagel – Community Education Coordinator

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Overview.....	1
Methodology.....	2
The Focus Group Questions	6
Data Collection	7
Themes	10
Summary of Focus Group Responses by Question	13
Feedback and Suggestions	20
Lessons Learned	22
Conclusion	23

Project Overview

In January 2016, Chief Thomas set a meeting with a team of Kent PD employees to discuss an idea for a project to assess police department effectiveness within the community. The team consisting of the department's Research and Development Analyst Sara Wood and two Community Education Coordinators Stacy Judd and John Pagel were tasked with the development and implementation of a research project with the goal of identifying the public's expectations, opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of the Kent Police Department.

The City of Kent is the 6th largest city in the state of Washington with a population of 125,000 people. The Kent Police Department is made up of 150 sworn officers and 50 civilian staff. Each year, patrol officers respond to around 95,000 calls for service. Units of the Kent Police Department include Traffic, a Special Operations Unit which includes bicycle and marine patrol officers, K9 officers, a Detective Unit, Special Investigations Unit which works on narcotics and vice crime and a Neighborhood Response Team (NRT). The NRT is a highly functioning and very effective unit in which one officer is assigned to each of the four sectors in the City of Kent. NRT's main goals include making contacts, building relationships, and tracking crime activity within the sectors. Working closely with NRT is the Community Education Unit tasked with community crime prevention programming and outreach to neighborhoods, businesses, and other segments of Kent's population.

Community outreach and communication have been deployed strategies of the Kent Police Department for over two decades. Community meetings are held in different parts of our city quarterly with sustained attendance of 60 community members. We offer Coffee with the Chief every two months with consistent community attendance. We offer crime prevention programs such as Neighborhood Block Watch and Business Watch. The Cops in Schools program assigns a patrol officer to an elementary school in Kent with the department expectation of regular visits and interaction with students. We partner with Kent Meridian High School, one of two high schools in Kent, to offer a Police Science class where students can enroll as an elective. We provide the Community Police Academy two times per year which includes eight weeks of instruction on the department and issues affecting the law enforcement profession. Kent Police implements many other community engagement programs throughout each division of the department. Members of the Kent community who participate in these programs have expressed their appreciation for the programming. They also indicate their understanding of police department operations when it comes to calling 911, community engagement by officers, staffing challenges and many other factors affecting Kent policing.

Recently the questions were asked – we do all of these initiatives and implement these programs – but do we really know and understand what our community wants? Are we addressing needs adequately? What community expectations are we falling short of reaching? We think we are doing a great job and have a lot of pride in the work we do. But after exploring these questions, it was determined that we need to evaluate community members perspectives and input to better answer these questions.

This project was identified as a quality data collection effort to explore these questions and to gain feedback and understanding of what the community wants from our department. We conducted 13 focus groups with a cross section of our community from March – July 2016. Over 150 community members participated in the focus groups. This report summarizes over 900 pages of typed transcripts from the tape recorded conversations. Information from these focus groups is summarized in this report which includes an overview of the main themes captured from the focus groups, summary of qualitative information by question, and an action oriented list of suggestions made by focus group participants for police and city leadership to review and make decisions on how best to incorporate this feedback. Ultimately, we found that in many cases we were responding to expectations. We also discovered expectations we did not know were out there. And we received feedback on programming and many suggestions and themes for service delivery were identified.

Methodology - Why Focus Groups?

As a form of qualitative research, focus groups are group interviews with a reliance on interaction within the group, based on topics and questions supplied by the moderator or interviewer. Focus groups help to understand experiences and responses of program participants. The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group. Focus groups are extremely effective for evaluating programs or services because they allow for hearing participants’ perspectives and address the “how and why” of successful initiatives.

For this project, the goal was to encourage dialogue among focus group participants surrounding questions developed to better understand community members’ perspective of the police department services. Unlike a survey, focus groups rely on the synergy within a group to reveal aspects of experiences and perspectives that would not be as accessible without group interaction. The interaction between participants and how they respond to each other is

important: providing agreement and disagreement, asking questions, giving answers, self-monitoring conversation, and encouraging dialogue.

The Kent Police Department has developed an ongoing working relationship with an outside research organization which has provided data collection and program assessment for various grant funded projects. The Kent PD project team worked with outside researchers to design the project and streamline the questions. This research group also facilitated training on focus group delivery to the project team. Throughout the project, the research group has provided technical assistance to ensure research best practices and to ensure results are as statistically significant as possible. Other organizations interested in exploring program success and validity may find this report useful in the development of their own qualitative data collection project.

Identifying the Focus Group Audience

Focus groups are often conducted with purposively selected samples in which participants are recruited from a limited number of sources. The team for this project was instrumental in the identification and facilitation of focus groups. Our Community Education Coordinators are the outreach of our department. They maintain contact with hundreds of Block Watches, Business Watches and many more community members who partner with the police



department, attend programs, work with the Kent School District, and more. The project team identified the initial focus group target audiences: three neighborhood focus groups, one business group, three youth focus groups, one focus group of apartment/property managers, one focus group with the police department's diversity task force, one focus group with the City's diversity task force, and a focus group with corrections inmates. Two additional focus groups were held with Kent Police Department employees as a control group to compare community level answers and perspectives with employees' – those that are providing the service. To ensure participants felt comfortable talking to each other in naturally occurring groups we intentionally facilitated focus groups broken down by each specific category rather than combine members. Focus groups were held beginning in March 2016 with the last focus group held in July 2016. As mentioned above, we wanted to explore the similarities and

differences between community members' responses and police department employees' responses to the eight focus group questions. In this report, we are including a brief snapshot of the police focus group qualitative data in this report to identify initial comparisons between the police employee focus group data and the community based focus groups. We will look deeper into these similarities and differences in phase two of this focus group project. At first glance, there are many similarities between the feedback from community groups and the police employee groups.

Recruiting Focus Group Participation

Outreach is an integral component for focus group participation. Because of the ongoing relationships with the community and the department, it was relatively easy to recruit participants for majority of the focus groups. The project team attempted to have an additional focus group with Green River Community College students at the downtown Kent Station campus however no students attended. One possible conclusion as to why we were not successful recruiting students from this particular campus is that we are limited in our working relationship with the Kent Station campus. While we used a variety of strategies to recruit focus group participants at the college, participant attendance was unsuccessful. We used the same outreach strategies to recruit members of the City of Kent's Diversity Task Force. The project team attended the Task Force's monthly meeting, disseminated a flyer at the meeting and via email, and as a result, we successfully recruited a focus group of eight of these task force members. It can be concluded that community relationships and outreach is a vital component for recruiting focus group participants. It is possible that we may not have had such large participation from our other group categories if the Community Education Coordinators on our project team did not already have sustained working relationships.

Determining the Number

Due to Kent Police Department's ongoing community outreach, we have a wide variety of contacts in the Kent community which are broken down by category, ie. neighbors, business members, youth, etc. It ended up being a natural process to identify the group categories for the focus groups. The project team took it one step further and included when possible two or more focus groups of each community group, ie. three neighborhood groups, two diversity groups, three youth groups, etc. In retrospect, based upon qualitative data collected, we determined that we could have conducted one focus group with each category and we would have obtained the same information. Therefore, it is recommended future projects should aim at one focus group per category. Data collected from multiple same category groups did not glean new or important information. For example, the same concerns were introduced by both

neighborhood groups. Similar feedback was provided between each youth group. While data is important, it can also be a hindrance to the project timeline. Data saturation occurs as more groups yield more qualitative data for the team to review and report on. Ultimately, the project team had to discern data and results from over 900 pages of transcript which is a large undertaking

Focus Group Logistics

The project team rotated through asking the questions. Research and Development Analyst Sara Wood, the project lead, reviewed the ground rules for the focus group (attachment) and started asking the first question. We rotated asking questions and follow up questions throughout the focus group discussion. The goal was to really understand specific examples. If someone said they want a “safe community”, our follow up question was, “what does safe look like, or feel like to you” to get a better idea of perspective.

The focus group discussions were relatively structured and the project team rotated through asking each of the eight questions. Each project team member had full ability to ask probing or follow up questions designed by our research group to obtain more specific answers and to moderate the group to ensure topics were being addressed and as specific as possible. The project team broached the fine line of letting participants talk and going off topic and having to bring them back to the specific question or answer. In some cases, the project team brought the group back and in many cases the group self-directed back to the topic of the question asked. This is one reason why focus group participants must feel comfortable talking with each other and why we kept groups separate from others. Those in attendance at each focus group were very unfamiliar with the focus group project. Most reported never having done a focus group before. Even though it was a new process to most, there was effective and extensive dialogue after asking each question.

Each focus group participation level ranged from seven to 25 people. The largest focus group facilitated was 25 high school students at Kentridge High School. This particular group included students during an actual class period. The next largest focus group was the business community which maxed out at 20 total representatives. While both of these groups were larger than recommended for a typical focus group, the project team came away with some relevant and significant suggestions and feedback. The smallest focus group included seven representatives from the City of Kent’s Diversity Task Force. Regardless of the size of group, the time of each focus group ranged from one to one and a half hours long. In some cases, the

project team traveled to the group. In other cases, a central city facility was located to host the focus group.

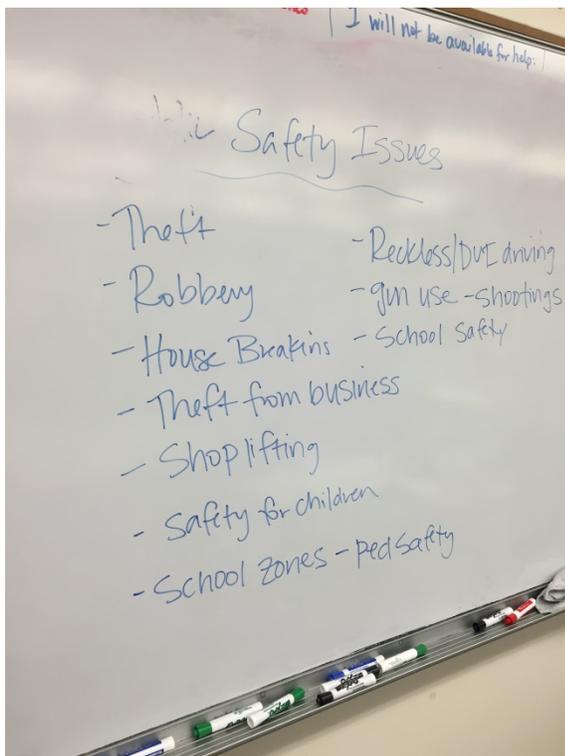
Focus Group Questions

Based on best practices of conducting qualitative research, we intended to limit the number of questions being asked to less than ten. We wanted to create an environment in each focus group, where participants felt safe and could be open with their feelings and perspectives. We developed a draft set of questions which began broad – community based and filtered down to police department specific. Utilizing our research partners who reviewed our draft set of questions; we fine-tuned the questions and identified probing or follow up questions which helped with facilitation to ensure we really understood the comments and feedback. The eight questions asked during the focus group project are included below:

Question	Probing/Follow Up Question
1. What kind of community do you want to live in?	How is that different from the way things are now? (ensure coverage of presence/absence of positive and negative tones) For broad answers, ie. “a sense of belonging”, follow up “what does that look like”?
2. What are some words you associate with the concept of public safety?	
3. Let’s list 2-3 public safety issues most important to you in our community.	Does it seem like these things are getting better or worse over the past 1-2 years? Give some examples to help understand your answer. How do you think the issue/concern came about? Positives and negatives.
4. When you think about these issues, how do you think the Kent Police Department handles or responds to them?	How do you think other people feel about this? What is the Kent Police Department doing that it should continue to do or do more of? What things can the Kent Police Department do to be more effective?

5. Think about the issues you feel the Kent Police Department could do better with. What do you think is keeping us from making progress towards them?	How do you think things got to be this way?
6. What do you want to see in your Kent Police Department?	What types of things would you consider that a good police department does effectively?
7. If you could change one thing about the Kent Police Department and its work for 2016, what would it be?	What types of things would you consider that a good police department does effectively? Do you think the Kent Police Department does these things effectively? Why or why not?
8. If we came back together in a year, what might you see that would tell you the things we talked about were starting to happen?	

Qualitative Data Collection



As mentioned in previous sections, each focus group were tape recorded. We ensured approval from participants in the group that recording responses was acceptable. We did not identify who was speaking, just recorded responses and dialogue. The Kent Police Department uses a transcription company for typing of statements taken by officers from suspects, witnesses, and victims for investigative purposes. We utilized the transcription company to type each recorded statement from each focus group. The 13 focus groups resulted in over 900 pages of transcript. In addition to the recordings, each project team member took notes during the focus group. Each member's notes are included as attachments in this report.

Once all of the transcripts were completed, the project team divided them up for review to begin identifying possible codes, themes and commonalities. As each transcript was reviewed,

codes for the qualitative analysis process were identified. Additionally, there were common themes identified across group, regardless of affiliation. Upon completing the initial review for codes and themes, each transcript was uploaded into the qualitative analysis online software. The project leader then went through each uploaded transcript and identified excerpts and attached excerpts to the appropriate code. Many excerpts are associated with more than one code. This process was instrumental in organizing the 900 pages of qualitative data and assisted the team in identifying common themes and priorities.

Codes

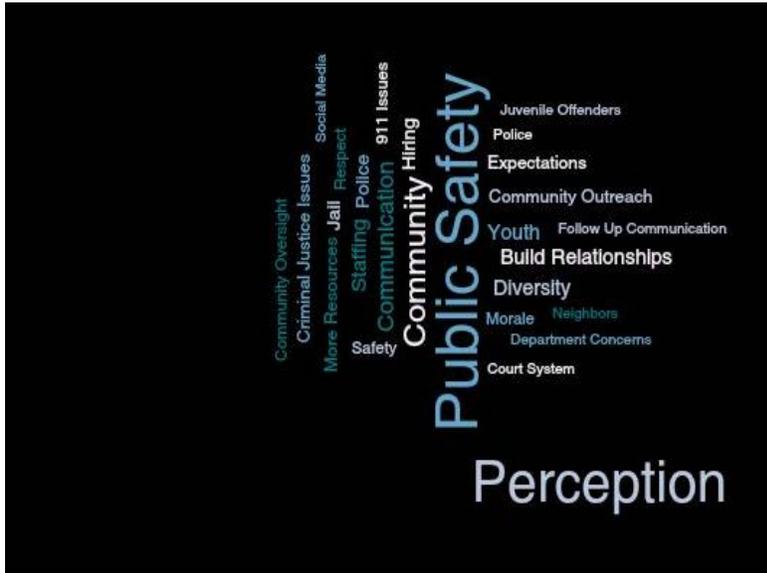
This report includes both the codes and themes taken from the focus group transcripts. The 13 identified codes help to narrow down the data. The codes are used to identify the themes and while some codes ultimately became themes, not all of the codes translate into the common themes identified in this project. To ensure research best practice and validity, the codes were identified and agreed upon by the project team. Each transcript was reviewed by each member of the project team. Several identified codes had “child” codes associated to narrow the information down to a specific subject as obvious subsets of codes were mentioned under certain overall codes. For example, one code is “criminal justice issues”. Across focus groups, common criminal justice issues mentioned had to do with our 911 system, the court system, juvenile offenders, and jail. Rather than make them all individual codes, we used “criminal justice issues” and included these “child” codes as subset to them. The following codes were used and applied to transcript excerpts within the qualitative analysis software:

Code	Description
Community – child code: safety	Addresses the question “what type of community do you want to live in?” Most common response was a “safe community”.
Perception	Various perceptions that the public has of the Kent Police Department were articulated throughout all focus group conversations.
Criminal Justice Issues – child code: 911 issues; court system; juvenile offenders; jail	Acknowledging that other system issues impact the police department and perception of service levels.
Department concerns – child code: Hiring; staffing; morale	The “child” codes were repeated throughout all focus groups as reasons service may not meet expectations.

Diversity	Comments surrounded internal department diversity and the diversity across the Kent community.
Feedback	This includes positive and negative input on department operations and programs.
Communication – child code: Police; neighbors; follow up communication; social media	Communication topics included many different forms of “child” codes.
Police	Identifies police department topics most commonly used for the two police department employee focus groups which will be used for further research into similar and contrasting perspectives.
Public Safety	This code identifies the most important or highest priority public safety issues in Kent.
Pull Quote	This code is used to identify any quotes to include in reporting or presenting of data.
Respect	This code is used for dialogue by focus group members involving respect of community by police officers.
Suggestions – child code: Community oversight, build relationships, social media	Each focus group provided plentiful suggestions for programming and projects to help meet concerns identified by the groups.
Youth	This code includes any comments about youth in the Kent community – from more activities to relationship building with this population.

Upon completion of transcript review, the transcript was uploaded into Dedoose, a web based qualitative software and the excerpts were coded. These excerpts provide context around the subject being spoken about as well as the code to better help understand the real concern, comment, or issue. These excerpts can be retrieved from the software based upon the code assigned and exported to better understand the commentary as themes were formed. This can be extremely useful moving forward if the department identifies a need to do other data analysis from the conversations.

Themes



As the excerpts were identified and coded, the project team worked to identify the most commonly mentioned themes across the focus groups and codes. Themes listed over the next couple of pages had to be mentioned in at least 8 of the 13 focus groups to be included as the most commonly mentioned. Additionally, the themes of community safety and public safety are categorized as separate

themes. The intent of the public safety theme is to list the top public safety issues participants commented on. The community safety theme has more to do with perception and locations in Kent which do not feel or appear safe.

The following is an overview of the major themes along with a description of the points and conversation which occurred within the groups. It is important to note that this list of themes is in order of frequency being mentioned. The first theme below was overwhelmingly the most common topic discussed among the groups. As the list goes down, themes were mentioned less than the one before, however, it is important to note that the frequency it was discussed among focus groups enhances the significance of the theme.

Community outreach and relationship building – This was overwhelmingly the most common mentioned theme throughout all focus groups. For the most part, all of the focus groups had immense respect and appreciation for our department. There was repeated acknowledgement that our employees do a lot to work with our community to build relationships. It was also said that we are missing a lot of our general population. We should work on communicating what we are doing while at the same time identifying methods to reach those untapped populations.

Police presence and visibility – For the most part, the public’s feeling/perception of safety is linked to police presence. Many expressed interest in seeing officers out of their cars walking through properties, increased bike patrols and the implementation of foot patrols. The majority

of our community may interact with the Kent Police Department one time. This one time interaction sets the tone for their perception of our department, services, and staffing.

Communication and connection – It was said repeatedly that communication improves perception of our department. While many acknowledged communication occurs, the community wants more of it. Also expressed by several participants includes their desire for follow up communication about investigations, calls for service, and outcomes of projects and programs. Communication with citizens, messaging/narrative, communication with each other, respectful interactions, strategic communications, and better platforms, for example Twitter and other social media methods used by youth, were all mentioned.

Community diversity – The community acknowledges that members of the department’s Command Staff seem to understand the importance of building relationships with our diverse community groups. Many perceive that this message is lost with patrol/line staff. Many lived in Kent for a long time and have seen growth and change – some changes positive, more negative – hard to get to know neighbors, there is not the “close-knit” community feeling, low perception of safety and high perception of crime are often the result.

Kent Police Department diversity – Several focus groups expressed their belief that our employees should better reflect the diversity of the Kent community. Priority should be placed on recruiting more diverse populations.

Change the narrative – It was suggested that we include more strategic communications to influence the messaging about our department and city. This includes utilizing social media and other communication methods to reach more people.

Public safety concerns – The majority of public safety issues expressed by community members include traffic safety, pedestrians/ jaywalking, speeding, red light running, staffing, property crime, quality of life, blight buildings, homeless, and graffiti.

Community safety – People want to feel safe but often don’t. There are certain places in Kent perceived as not safe. Many are not aware of ongoing work the department does in those areas. Key words used to describe community safety include lighting, homeless, drug activity, and gun violence.

Criminal justice issues – It was shared by a couple focus groups concerns with 911 not assisting callers with providing officer response when the public wants it –reliance on online reporting, non-emergency number. Other criminal justice issues include a greater need for more resources and mental health assistance to include drug addiction services in-house at the Kent jail.

Community programs – Those who participate in Kent PD programs get the messages we are sending and are very appreciative of not only the programs but the work our officers do. It was clear though that many segments of Kent are not participating. Participants suggest identifying other methods for reaching these segments.

Comparison of Police Employee and Community Focus Groups

We conducted focus groups with two police department employee groups. The first department group included a mix of 10 officers, detectives, and sergeants. The second department group included sergeants and commanders. The community focus groups overwhelmingly talked about their interest and desire to build sincere relationships with officers and have positive interaction with officers in uniform beyond the community outreach work the department already does. Similar comments and themes can also be seen in the police employee data. It was repeatedly said by officers that they want to have the communication with the public. Many of them commented on why they started out in the law enforcement profession was to help people. The limits put on their ability to interact, get out of their car, and follow up on calls is due to staffing and resources. Both police and community focus groups mentioned and acknowledged the staffing and resources as barriers to having this community outreach and interaction.

The police groups acknowledge that they don't always take the time to explain calls or what to expect next or how the investigative process works because of staffing. On most if not all shifts, officers are going from call to call to call. There is immense interest among police employees to be pro-active, work on projects, and interact with the community but It is difficult to do that when calls are holding and call times go up.

To better understand the dynamics of the similarities between the police and community focus groups, it is recommended that further analysis of the qualitative data be done to really capture the mutual interests of community and police officers.

Summary of Responses by Question

Perhaps the main value of research using focus groups is the qualitative feedback received from participants. This feedback can most often be pulled into overall themes which can be used by the department to identify strategies to best address the themes. While this report includes an overview of the themes identified in the previous section, we also included the responses by question. Categorizing responses and data by question provides bulleted points that were most talked about among participants.

Using the online software for future data interpretation, we will be able to attribute answers to specific focus groups which helps understand the audience and possible rationale for their opinions. This section summarizes participate input by the questions asked.

1. What kind of community do you want to live in?

- Safe
- Active
- Know neighbors
- Well connected
- Fun
- Clean
- Diverse
- People are helped that need it
- More rehabilitation or detox centers for drug addiction in Kent
- City that takes care of physical self/infrastructure
- More effective services for homeless
- Free of crime, graffiti
- Historic downtown should be as active as Kent Station
- To bring grandkids to downtown Kent – should feel safe. Waterpark – during day does not feel safe
- Colorful, picturesque
- Activities for all ages
- Drug Free
- Walkable
- Police regularly drive through neighborhoods
- Police available when needed

-
- Well lit
 - Communities engaged with services
 - Forum to express concerns
 - Different forms and methods of communications
 - Officers are approachable and welcoming
 - Feel comfortable asking for assistance from officers
 - Help people understand it is okay to call 911 for help
 - More information on non-emergency phone number use
 - Officers are easily recognizable by the public
 - Mutual respect between police and community
 - Fewer panhandlers on street corners
 - More prevention programming
 - City better manages blight buildings
 - More bike patrol year round
 - Safe parks – no bad characters – families enjoying their time
 - Safe for pedestrians
 - No crime – can walk outside at night and feel safe

Focus group participants were very vivid in their vision of the kind of community they want to live in. Some felt they were living their vision and that our community meets their expectations. Many felt there were areas that could be improved to reach their expectations.

2. What are some words you associate with the concept of “public safety”?

- Crime
- Emergency services
- Leadership
- People out and about doing good things
- Respect
- Enforcement/visibility in a positive manner – “visibility is huge”
- Perception and appearance of police department should be friendly, approachable
- Reduce paperwork for officers
- Visibility is non-existent
- Know the community
- Knowledge

-
- Prevent crime
 - Downtown Kent at night does not feel safe. Certain areas in Kent are not safe so many stay away
 - Uncertainty
 - Awareness among community of what's going on around them
 - Officers are aware of issues
 - Mentality of engagement filtered down
 - Fear of police
 - Neighborhood Response Team
 - Officers pro-actively drive through business areas

Many used this opportunity to define public safety as our police department and others used this question to actually prioritize their top public safety concerns.

3. List two to three public safety issues most important to you in our community.

- Pedestrian safety by train platform
- Residential burglary
- Red light running
- Property crime
- Quality of life issues
- Speeding
- Jaywalking
- Robbery
- Homelessness
- Drugs
- Prostitution at hotels
- Mental illness
- Fear of police
- Shootings
- Gang activity and graffiti
- Vehicle prowls
- Parking
- Vacant buildings feel unsafe
- Crime feels like it's getting worse

-
- Illegal street racing on 212th
 - General perception that Kent is not safe
 - Not enough activities for young people

This question did an excellent job of identifying the main public safety concerns and issues faced by this cross-section of our community. Property crime and quality of life issues such as graffiti, loitering, homelessness were common concerns brought up by the participants. Traffic safety issues were also mentioned across all of the focus groups. In many cases, participants indicated that several crime issues appear to be getting worse over the years. At the same time, participants acknowledged lack of funding and resources as main reasons why conditions appear to decline. The neighborhood focus groups also discussed the influx of residents moving to Kent from Seattle due to cost of housing. There were also discussions surrounding neighborhood vitality and lack of connection with neighbors which they attribute to their perception that conditions are worsening.

4. When you think about these issues, how do you think the Kent Police Department handles or responds to them?

- Unsure of how Kent Police responds to issues
- Kent PD does a pretty good job handling issues
- Response is good
- Courteous officers
- 911 frustrating regarding repeating questions
- There is a disconnect between what is important to department and what is important to community
- Non-emergency calls take a long time for officers to respond
- Officers do not respond to vehicle prowls
- Too reactive, not proactive enough
- Heard that officers will not respond to property calls
- Community policing important – want to know officers
- Filing a report online is not solution in many cases as people are victimized and want to talk to an officer about it
- Why do six officers respond to one call
- Little things are the most important
- Example of a drug house in a neighborhood and how there was good two-way communication. Neighbors understood investigative process.

-
- Onus needs to be on community to call 911
 - If response time is slow, it will discourage community from calling
 - Consider community officers, precincts
 - Increase community engagement
 - Feel like if group of young people hanging out, police response is faster

This question resulted in a lot of feedback about our police department in regards to enforcement, education, programs, perception in the community, 911 services, and more. Feedback was positive and sometimes negative where suggestions followed comments about how to improve in areas mentioned.

5. Think about the issues you feel the police department could do better with. What do you think is keeping us from making progress towards them?

- Staffing
- Money – need more officers, more foot patrols, and more bike patrols
- Funding is main issue
- No follow up to crimes – get back to people
- More resources in general
- Consistency to call responses
- Additional resources made available at the jail to include mental health and drug/alcohol counseling, job training, etc.
- Offer feedback specifically on case investigations
- Pay attention to “gateway” crimes
- Need more administrative staff to take workload from officers (ie. paperwork, etc)
- More community programs
- Lack of collaboration with other police departments/agencies
- People don’t call 911 when they should because perception is police department slow to respond or do not respond at all
- Increase cultural competence and understanding
- Need to have internal motivation from rank and file regarding cultural competence. Command staff seems to understand, not sure if patrol officers/sergeants do
- Need to have complaint mechanism and it should be promoted to the public
- More community engagement
- If I see a police car as a young person, I don’t feel safe. I feel nervous

-
- Happy balance between being strict authority to regulate laws and being friendly

We provided an opportunity specifically asking what areas the Kent Police Department can improve upon. While comments about improvement were weaved in between all of the questions, each focus group had suggestions on how they perceive the department can do better. One of the focus groups held was with East Hill area residents. Those who live in the K4, or Panther Lake sector area are relatively new residents to Kent following annexation in 2010. These residents repeatedly compared their perception of the Kent Police Department to that of the King County Sheriff's Office. They responded that the Kent Police Department has been much more responsive and effective post-annexation of this area compared to when residents who lived in this area were non-incorporated King County.

6. What do you want to see in your police department?

- Build relationships
- More community outreach
- More communications
- Community police stations - use vacant buildings
- See officers in neighborhoods
- Identify different ways to communicate and promote activities
- More officers in areas where there is more crime
- More community outreach in foreign languages
- Hold events at culturally diverse facilities
- More visibility
- Community oversight or advisory groups
- Officers should be sincere and show they care
- More sincere one on one interaction and education between officers and community
- Increase crosswalks across 104th
- Offer a quarterly forum specifically for businesses
- Community programs for kids, after school programs
- Use facilities in the community for programming or where people gather
- Ethnically diverse police force
- Police involved in school activities on school campuses
- Empower citizens to be more effective at sharing information
- Officers willing to mentor and connect

-
- Equal enforcement for all regardless of age, skin color, social class
 - Consider using Twitter or Snapchat for communicating with young people
 - More communication – police officers make contact with people on positive notes

Suggestions were brought up by each focus group. These suggestions are captured in the overall actionable steps included at the end of this report and organized by “theme”.

7. If you could change one thing about Kent PD and its work for 2016, what would it be?

- More officers
- More police presence
- Introduce police work to young people – it’s not just about enforcement
- Certain places do not feel safe – work on those perceptions/crime if occurring
- Change city codes to enhance safety at businesses
- More female officers
- More diversity of police officers
- More bike officers
- Reduced drug activity on East Hill
- More patrols at night in business areas
- Multiple police cars at one scene creates perception of inefficiency
- Use traffic cameras more
- Address drug and mental illness issues
- More friendly interaction with officers
- More visibility of officers in uniform
- Award community/citizens for good behavior
- Once lights go out, Kent takes on totally different persona. Work on that
- More code requirements to increase lighting, safety, CPTED

While some of these questions seem repetitive, this question assisted us in hearing from the public their top priorities and what they feel could be reasonably more easily changed or improved.

8. If we came back together in a year, what might you see that would tell you the things we talked about were starting to happen?

- More traffic officers conducting radar and traffic enforcement

-
- No property crime (vehicle prowls, thefts, residential burglaries) in neighborhoods
 - More communication
 - Safe parks
 - More opportunities like this focus group to provide feedback
 - Share monthly safety tips
 - Articles in Kent Reporter about department and include what has been accomplished
 - More patrol cars driving around, not just responding to calls
 - Less homeless, mentally ill, and drug addicts visible in community
 - Tax discounts or lower insurance rates for business owners who maintain property
 - More communications about crime issues, events, and what we are doing
 - More interactions with officers in uniform
 - Focus on drug recovery rather than “war on drugs” approach
 - More lessons instead of tickets, ie. when pulling young person over for traffic

The department should consider holding a smaller version of this focus group project in 2017 to determine any movement on perception level and to help those participants identify any work we have done towards their suggestions.

Feedback and Suggestions for Programming

In addition to the bulleted list of comments by question in the previous section, the following is a summary of program/project suggestions offered by focus group members which could assist in addressing the most commonly mentioned themes:

- Increase bike patrols in all sectors.
- Officers should contact apartment managers in complexes when responding to calls.
- Utilize property managers for information on crime within the apartment complexes. Send them crime reports – two way communication.
- Create venue for apartment property managers to communicate and/or hold meetings for information sharing purposes.
- Officers should get out of their cars and talk with citizens more.

-
- Implement foot patrols in areas for improved visibility.
 - Officers should attend cultural/local events – not just command staff level attendance.
 - Take advantage of opportunities to learn about other cultures and participate.
 - Identify outside of the box target audiences and locations (ie. churches, temples, events, etc.)
 - Personify our staff. Meet and greets, highlight officer of the month within the community.
 - Utilize a community oversight/accountability group.
 - Lower threshold for written test scores for who gets oral board interviews for police hiring.
 - Utilize more social media.
 - Provide flow chart/process information for how cases are handled from patrol to detectives.
 - Work with Valley Communications to address 911 issues and concerns.
 - Provide a mechanism for new officers to be connected with the community with a priority placed on community relations training.
 - Identify a mechanism for the community to give feedback, file complaints, express concern around issues and promote this process within the community.
 - Add community engagement as rating on employee evaluations.
 - Hold businesses/private property owners more accountable for lack of safety and issues on their property.
 - Use school events as mechanism to attend and improve relationships with police, ie. field days, curriculum nights, back to school celebrations, etc.
 - Utilize technology to improve crime statistics/map that is sent to public.

-
- Implement and broadcast more traffic safety enforcement/issues – ie. pedestrian dangers, add school zones (Kentridge HS on 208th).

Lessons Learned

This project spanned several months and while important information was gained from community members, this project could have used less time with the lower number of focus groups being held. Holding too many focus groups may result in data saturation which our project team acknowledged in this focus group project. Too many groups also results in many more pages and notes of comments for review which often do not provide new or additional information. The project team agrees that we began to hear the same themes and messages across the three neighborhood groups, the similar diversity groups, and the similar youth groups. It is recommended that future projects hold only one focus group of 10-12 participants in each identified category.

Outreach is an integral component for focus group participation. Because of the ongoing relationships with the community and the department, it was relatively easy to recruit participants for all but one of the focus groups. The relationship component is very important as was seen in the focus group with Green River Community College students at the Kent Station location. While the city works with this campus, the police department interaction with staff and students is not as high as in other segments of our community. A flyer announcing the focus group was created and distributed by Green River Community College staff. The project team travelled to the campus to hold the focus group in a classroom, but no students were in attendance. We used these same strategies to market to our other focus group categories and because of existing relationships, these focus groups were well attended.

We included two focus groups of police department employees. The intent of these employee focus groups is to compare their perspectives to the same questions to that of comments from the community. It might make sense for future projects to conduct the community based focus groups and complete the analysis from those groups prior to conducting comparison focus groups which is what the police employee groups are for this project. Keeping data and comments separated between comparison groups is an important element.

We ultimately learned that the Kent community is very supportive of its police department. While many comments and suggestions are included that seem opposite of that, each focus group we held spent a lot of time commenting on our effectiveness, professionalism, competency, and appreciation for the work done in our community.

Immense pride from the community was shown to us over the course of facilitating these focus groups. It is clear that those who participate in our community outreach and ongoing programming understand our department operations, share information with family, friends, and neighbors, and truly appreciate and respect our department. Moving forward, the department should recognize the programs and projects currently implemented and promote them strategically to reach those not currently involved in department programming. The other challenge is understanding that most people come into contact with our department one time, when they are a crime victim or need assistance and this one interaction sets the tone of their perception of our department moving forward. It is challenging to reach and change this population's perception based off of one contact.

Conclusion

This community focus group project has been instrumental in gathering qualitative data from community members to assist the Kent Police Department leadership in identifying gaps in service and addressing perception issues which block the ability for some community members to be favorable of department operations. While suggestions for improvement were given to us throughout the focus groups, Kent Police Department employees should be proud of the feedback, input, and positive stories shared by community members who have interacted with the department through programs, being the victims of crime, calls for service and assistance.

Data collected from this project will be utilized for programming and project changes and implementation. Moving forward, over 900 pages of transcript will continue to be analyzed and dug into deeper for additional themes and comparisons. It is recommended that themes from this project be compared to quantitative surveys and other data collected from different means to show consistency among input and community perceptions. Driving programming to focus on and achieve these commonalities will provide focus and direction for future programming of the Kent Police Department. Additionally, the department should consider convening a smaller section of focus groups in 2017 to follow up on these questions and address feedback provided in this project to assess perception and service levels again.

Those who participated in this project have been extremely appreciative for making this opportunity available to them to provide input and feedback. Building trust is a foundation to a law enforcement agency within a community. Opening up the opportunity for members of the public to provide their input is an important step in trust building. While the feedback and input obtained in this project is important, the impact this five month project has had on those community members who have participated and heard of it helps frame their perspective of

trust and apparency in our department. Identifying actionable steps to work towards the project's most common themes will continue to build that trust.