



A Report on Crime in Downtown DC (1999 – 2010)

by the Downtown DC Business Improvement District

A recent Downtown DC Business Improvement District (BID) analysis of crime shows offenses in Downtown DC have declined dramatically over the past 12 years, dropping from an average of 7.4 crimes a day to about 3.8, based on Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) crime statistics.

The vast majority of Downtown crimes are thefts from office buildings and automobiles, offenses the Downtown BID is working strategically with its partners to address.

Overall, people's perceptions of Downtown DC have improved as well, according to Richard H. Bradley, executive director of the Downtown DC Business Improvement District (BID). A 1998 survey of Downtown pedestrians showed 25% of respondents found it clean, while 50% said it was safe. This compares with 77% and 86%, respectively, in 2010, several years after Downtown BID employees began maintaining and patrolling Downtown streets.

In addition, perceptions of safety as measured in the Downtown Neighborhood Survey, which helps the Downtown BID better understand the preferences and concerns of the Downtown community, shows the percentage of people who saw no need for safety improvement, or virtually none, doubled since 2007—from 12% to 27%—while the percentage of people who felt there was a strong need for improvements fell by about one-third, from 60% to 43%.

CRIME	Incidents		Change 1999 vs 2010	
	1999	2010 (1)	by incident	by percent
Theft from Auto	1,092	224	-868	-79%
Burglary	207	50	-157	-76%
Stolen Auto	162	66	-96	-59%
Theft	934	840	-94	-10%
Assault with a Deadly Weapon	116	53	-63	-55%
Robbery	165	139	-26	-16%
Homicide	0	0	0	N/A
Arson	0	0	0	N/A
Sex Abuse	8	24	16	204%
Total	2,684	1,396	-1,288	-48%

(1) 2010 is based upon BID estimate from available data.

"Simply put, Downtown DC is safe," said Richard H. Bradley, executive director of the Downtown BID. "Crime has dropped in half since 1999, while use of the area has increased by approximately 62,000 people a day on weekdays and 26,000 people a day on weekend days. Clearly, more and more people are beginning to realize that it's safe. And perception is everything. It plays a critical role in the choices that people make, including their decision to live, work and play in the Downtown BID area."

"The strategies are many for Downtown's public safety improvements," Bradley added. "First are the public safety programs, many in conjunction with the MPD and other police agencies. Next is the work of many of us to make meaningful public environmental improvements. Finally, and perhaps most important, is the tremendous amount of public-private development that has occurred Downtown over the past 13 years, transforming it from a 9-to-5 office district to a 24/7 work-live-play center city."

As the 13-year-old Downtown BID has strengthened its partnerships with public safety officials and property managers, overall crime has dropped 48%, from 2,684 in 1999 to an estimated 1,396 in 2010. Offenses have fallen in eight of nine categories now tracked by the MPD, with the most significant percentage drops occurring in the "theft from auto" (-79%), "burglary" (-76%) and "stolen auto" (-59%) categories.

In absolute terms, the "theft from auto," "burglary" and "stolen auto" categories also registered the biggest decline in the number of unlawful incidents, with fewer than 868, 157 and 96 incidents, respectively. However, "theft" (from office buildings) and "theft from auto" continue to be problematic in the Downtown BID area, accounting for most of the crimes committed here.

Crime	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (1)
Theft from Auto	1,092	1,243	1,054	879	506	336	229	373	306	492	389	224
Burglary	207	210	233	243	177	138	116	111	93	89	59	50
Stolen Auto	162	176	195	217	169	104	98	128	134	101	86	66
Theft	934	953	875	645	708	659	710	810	925	872	952	840
Assault with a Deadly Weapon (2)	116	115	108	91	128	91	81	104	86	86	61	53
Robbery	165	199	227	141	129	115	95	124	129	149	126	139
Homicide	0	1	1	2	3	1	3	0	0	1	0	0
Arson	0	1	1	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Sex Abuse (3)	8	4	13	5	7	2	3	6	7	10	14	24
Total	2,684	2902	2707	2226	1829	1447	1336	1656	1680	1800	1687	1396

(1) 2010 is based upon BID estimates from available data, see source note below.

(2) Years 1999 and 2000 reflect Assault

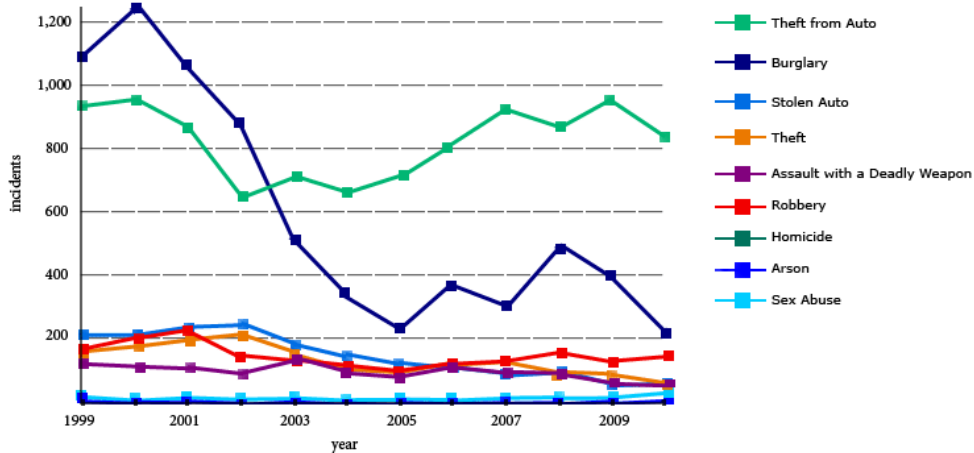
(3) Years 1999 and 2000 represent Rape Source : Geocoded Information Management System (IMS) crime data queried on 09/29/10. All statistics presented here are based on preliminary DC Index crime data and include Homicide, Sex Abuse, Robbery, Assault with a Deadly Weapon, Arson, Burglary, Stolen Auto, Theft, and Theft from Auto.

The data do not represent official statistics submitted to the FBI under the Uniform Crime Reporting program (UCR). All preliminary offenses are coded based on DC criminal code and not the FBI offense classifications. All statistics are subject to change due to a variety of reasons, such as a change in classification, the determination that certain offense reports were unfounded, or late reporting. Please understand that any comparisons between MPD preliminary data as published here and the official crime statistics published by the FBI under the Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR) are inaccurate and misleading.

Excludes crimes for which no location could be identified (between 1% and 3% of all crimes).

Please note that changes to MPD's PSA and District boundaries occasionally occur. The statistics above are based on current police boundaries as of September 2, 2007.

Annual Crime Incidents in the Downtown BID by Crime Type (1999-2010)



Strategy I: Public Safety Programs

The renaissance that has taken place in Downtown has helped transform the area's image and identity from one perceived as "dull, dirty and dangerous" to that of a vibrant, thriving and dynamic urban center. At the heart of this transformation is the Downtown BID's corps of highly visible Safety/Hospitality and Maintenance workers, known as SAMs. From the beginning, these roving concierges, law enforcement aides and goodwill ambassadors have worked to create a safe and welcoming environment seven days a week, 362 days a year by serving as the ears, eyes and caretakers of Downtown.

According to a recent National Bureau of Economic Research paper, "Public Safety through Private Action: An Economic Assessment of BIDs, Locks, and Citizen Cooperation (www.nber.org/papers/w15877)," private security such as that offered by BIDs is a cost-effective way to curtail crime and has helped reduce illegal behavior by 3.4 crimes for every \$10,000 spent by the average BID—effectively buying some \$200,000-worth of crime prevention. In comparison, the Downtown BID safety budget, which allocates \$3.3 million for Safety/Hospitality workers, provides \$66 million worth of crime prevention.

"It's been well documented that disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked," said Bradley. "Each year, the Downtown BID spends about \$5.7 million, or 55% of our budget, on the entire SAM Program to focus on keeping streetscapes clean and safe and the Downtown environment welcoming to ensure a level of social control in public spaces. We realize that our ability to reduce crime mirrors how much we expend to improve the physical environment and keep patrols on the street almost daily."

In addition, the Downtown BID offers the following services to enhance safety and reduce crime to ensure that workers and visitors have a satisfying Downtown experience:

- **SAM-At-Your-Side service** — As a courtesy to Downtown workers, SAMs are available during evening hours, Monday through Friday, to accompany Downtown workers to public transportation, garages or vehicles parked on secluded streets to ensure that persons traveling after dark feel safe and secure. Workers can request an escort by calling 202.624.1550. Typically, a SAM will arrive within 10 minutes.
- **Safety First brochure** — This common-sense guide to safety offers tips, including how to respond to panhandlers, to ensure an enjoyable and trouble-free Downtown visit for all.
- **Safety lobby fairs** — Every Tuesday, the Downtown BID's environmental services director, Hiram Brewton, along with two SAMs and MPD officers, visit Downtown office buildings to provide information about personal safety and preventable crimes. Workers receive handouts—including maps, brochures and automobile anti-theft cards—during these lunchtime fairs. About 6,000 workers attended the information fairs last year.
- **Outta Sight anti-theft campaign** — In conjunction with the MPD, the Downtown BID issues friendly reminders to drivers cautioning them not to leave valuables in plain sight to lock out thieves. Occasionally, SAMs place safety information cards on cars in areas that have seen a recent rash of car break-ins or where valuables are visible from the street.

"The Metropolitan Police Department has always worked hand in hand with the Downtown BID to reduce crime and enhance the living and working environment in Downtown Washington," said DC Chief of Police Cathy L. Lanier. "The BID has been a great partner in our successful efforts to fight crime and provide a safe place for people to come and enjoy themselves and experience the best the city has to offer."

About two dozen law enforcement agencies have jurisdiction in Washington, DC. The Downtown BID partners with five —MPD, the US Park Police, the Metro Transit Police Department, the US Secret Service Uniformed Division and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Police—to keep Downtown workers, visitors and residents safe.

Specifically, the Downtown BID and First District police have worked closely on strategic problem solving, outreach opportunities—including National Night Out—and coordinated approaches to address crime and quality of life issues since the Downtown BID began operations in 1997. The First District is now led by Commander David K. Kamperin, who provides stellar leadership on the Downtown BID's Safety Alliance (see below).

In addition, the MPD operates the following activities independently in the Downtown BID area: the Chinatown-Gallery Place Security Detail, a 10-officer patrol created in 2009 along the 7th Street corridor near Gallery Place and the Verizon Center; the Asian Liaison Unit (ALU), an active community-oriented policing unit established in 1996; and the Bicycle-Foot Patrol, an extra two-person detail formed in 1997.

"The transformation that we've seen is really incredible and is attributable to public-private partnerships, including our monthly Downtown Safety Alliance—in which the First District MPD and other safety community members participate—and Property Managers Council meetings, our trained SAMs, and the BID's ability to assume a leadership position by pinpointing problem areas and acting aggressively to work to resolve them," said Bradley. "This is truly a win-win situation for the Downtown and the city."

Strategy II: Public Environmental Improvements

When the Downtown BID began operations in November 1997, Downtown DC was a very different place. Parts of Downtown were active only five days a week, eight to 10 hours a day, and populated primarily with federal and DC government offices. Litter and 129 vacant buildings and surface parking lots abounded.

The area's transformation is really about a perfect storm of converging forces. Shortly after the Downtown BID was inaugurated, the SAMs hit the streets. Maintenance SAMs keep sidewalks and curb lines clean and public spaces beautiful through daily care and maintenance. They pick up litter; remove graffiti, gum and posters; empty trashcans; hang banners and flower baskets; plant flowers; and paint light poles—all physical improvements that help create an exceptional urban environment. As the first point of contact for assistance and information, as well as serving as the iconic face of Downtown, Safety/Hospitality SAMs make the Downtown experience welcoming, inviting, easily accessible, and convenient for all.

Other BID actions:

- **Creating the Homeless Outreach Service Team (HOST)** — Twelve specially trained SAMs recognize and engage chronically homeless individuals with psychological and addiction problems and work closely with, and are trained by, a team of on-the-street professionals who develop strategies for assisting the homeless and moving them into permanent supportive housing.
- **Supporting better lighting and design** — A DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) partnership led to upgraded street lights that adhered to Downtown BID Streetscape Standards, which increased the number of light poles, created a more evenly lighted environment, and eliminated unsafe dark areas.
- **Encouraging residential development** — To create a 24-7 "living" Downtown replete with housing, retail, restaurants and "walkable streets," the Downtown BID worked with private, public and civic interests to urge the city to spur housing development and incentives.

Since 1999, the Downtown population—including residents, workers, and visitors—has increased by an estimated 40% on weekdays and 48% on weekend days. "All of this happened while the crime rate dipped by about 50%," said Bradley. "This is significant because it shows the crime rate has fallen even more as additional people have made their way into the Downtown BID area."

Strategy III: Public-Private Development

Public-private development partnerships have been key to the area's transformation. The MCI Center (now Verizon Center) opened in December 1997, a month after the Downtown BID began service. As the area's first, big transformative project, it helped catalyze more Downtown development. The arena attracted crowds from every ward of the city and suburbia and spurred other investments. Office buildings, restaurants, and small art galleries sprung up.

Residential development became a significant component of Downtown's revitalization. The city leveraged public funds to invest in private development, helping to bring Gallery Place—Downtown's largest mixed-use project—to 7th and H Streets. It also supported other developments in Downtown, including the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the International Spy Museum, and the Sidney Harman Center for the Arts.

Following years of economic stagnation and inertness, Downtown is now more vibrant, inviting and smart. It has evolved into a bustling, 24/7 environment anchored by new housing— more than 8,700 people live in the one-square-mile Downtown BID area, compared to 4,000 in the early 1990s, with another 4,000 new residents within four blocks of the BID boundary—retail, cinemas, theaters, destination restaurants, sidewalk cafes, private and public museums, and a thriving commercial district. Downtown now boasts \$10.6 billion in area development projects and \$35.5 million in streetscape enhancements.

"Crime can be tackled in any number of ways," said Bradley. "The best defense is an aggressive offense. The hard work and dedication of our Downtown SAMs made this possible, as did partnerships in both the public and private realms—particularly with the Metropolitan Police Department—which refocused attention on the quality of public spaces to create remarkable urban experiences."

Please direct any questions or comments to Hiram K. Brewton, the Downtown BID's director of Environmental Services, at safety@downtowndc.org, or call 202.661.7571.

The Downtown BID wishes to thank Gwendolyn Crump, acting director of MPD's Office of Communications, and Lieutenant Nicholas Breul for their assistance.