

VIOLENCE AND DISORDER AT THE BANKS -CENTRAL BUSINESS SECTION-

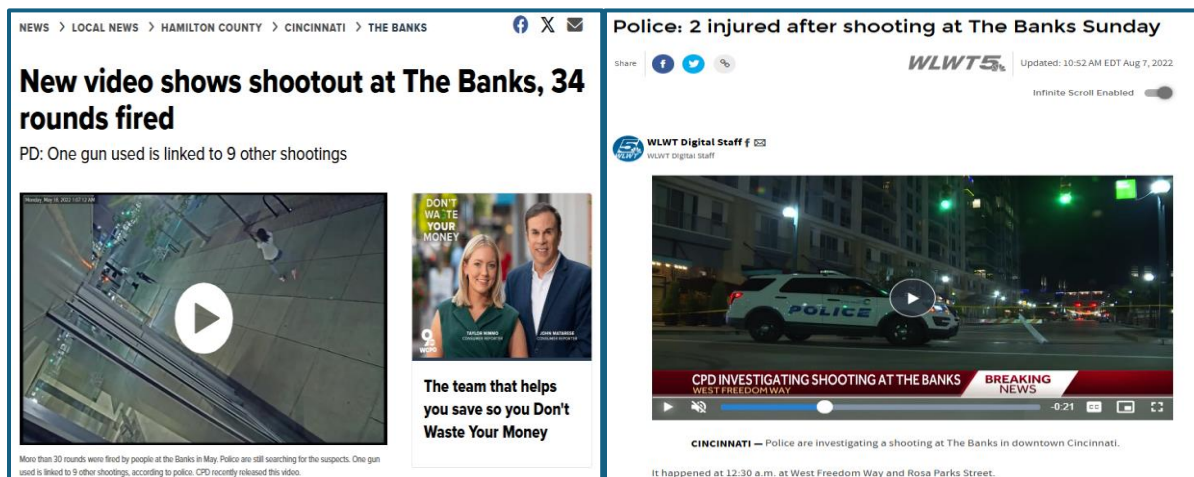
The Team

City Manager's Office, CPD Central Business Section, CPD's Crime Analysis and Problem-Solving Team, The Banks Community Authority, Cincinnati Parks, Department of Traffic & Engineering, Law, & 3CDC.

Introduction

On August 7, 2022, three people were shot in the densely packed entertainment area of Cincinnati, known as the DORA at the Banks. This happened despite officers staffing the area at the time of the incident. This was not the only shooting incident, before or after. It was also not the only time shots were fired near police.

This area was designated as a DORA (designated outdoor refreshment area) in March of 2021. Central Business Officers' concern for violence and other criminal activity here steadily grew through 2022 and into 2024.



Problem Identification

Central Business Section officers scanned this issue and preliminarily identified the problem as: "Groups of juveniles and young adults gathering and creating their own block parties, often leading to disorderly activity and violent behavior."

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Analysis

As detailed analysis began, investigators focused on two zones. The larger Dora and Smale Park Zone makes up the entire Dora area in downtown Cincinnati. This area extends from the professional football stadium on the western edge of the business core's riverfront, to the baseball stadium and arena on the eastern end. Second, investigators focused on a smaller zone within this area, known as the Plaza at the Banks. This is the most concentrated bar and weekend entertainment area, on East Freedom Way between Walnut Street and Joe Nuxhall Way.



Analysis of 2022 through early 2024 supported the officers' concerns that crime, and particularly violence, was escalating here. 123 offenses were reported here in 2022, and 141 offenses occurred in 2023, a 15% increase. In 2023, twelve aggravated assaults occurred here. Offenses occurred most frequently during the summer, on weekends, and during peak entertainment district hours.

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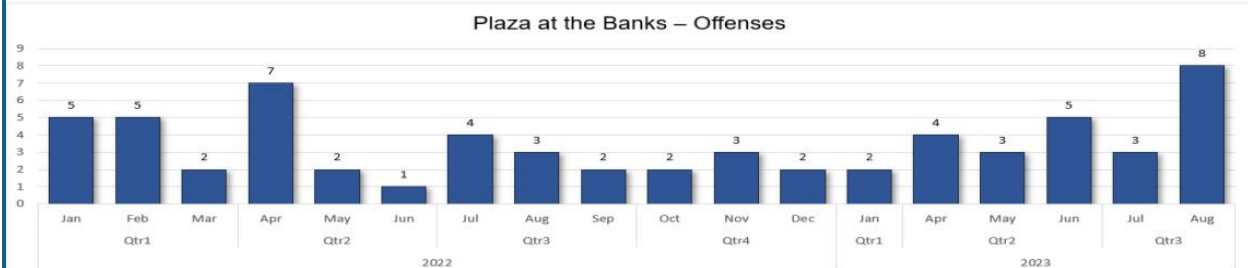
Dora and Smale Park – Offenses

- 2023 Offenses Breakdown:
 - Theft from Auto: 34
 - Personal/Other Theft: 34
 - Agg Assault: 7
 - Auto Theft: 3
 - Robbery: 2
 - Burglary/BE: 2
 - Rape: 1
- Top 10% Block Concentrations: 100 Block of E Freedom Way / 100 Block of Joe Nuxhall Way



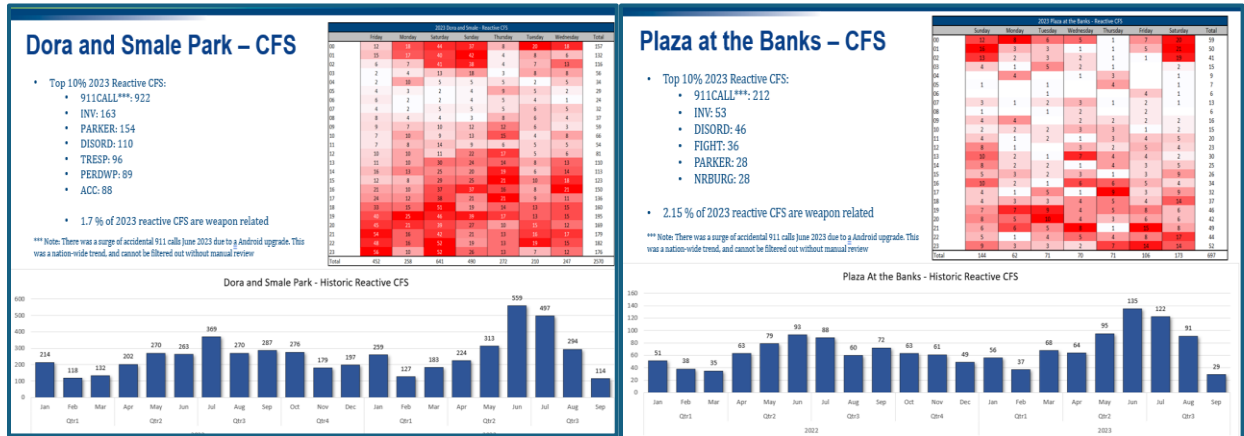
Plaza at the Banks – Offenses

- 2023 Offenses Breakdown:
 - Personal/Other Theft: 36
 - Agg Assault: 4
 - Theft from Auto: 3
 - Auto Theft: 1
 - Burglary/BE: 1



Calls for police service also reflected significant demand, with more than 200 calls to the Plaza at the Banks portion of this area, and hundreds more calls to the larger Dora and Smale Park footprint.

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Responses

The following responses were implemented to confront this problem:

- Supplemental high visibility staffing by CPD’s SWAT and CDRT teams
- A Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessment was conducted late in 2023, and presented to Banks Community Authority in January of 2024
 - Changes at the DORA have included:
 - Removed public seating areas
 - Secured outdoor seating when businesses are closed
 - Building owners’ approval to add camera installations
 - \$120,000 approval for new lighting and landscape alterations
 - Cincinnati Parks has:
 - Explored additional lighting options on Marian Spencer Way steps to Smale Park
 - Considered additional signage displaying Smale Park hours at entrance points
- A tow truck detail was established to quickly address hazardous and egregious parking violators, to keep more organization and to preserve public safety access in this high density and sometimes disorderly environment
- DOTE and CPD consulted with e-scooter companies to “geofence” this area, preventing scooters from operating in this pedestrian area
- Discussions are ongoing regarding place management practices

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CPTED, The Banks, 9/2023 4

RECENT TRENDS IMPACTING PUBLIC SAFETY

- Increased crowds of unaccompanied minor youth in the DORA ("smash and grab incidents", "underage drinking", "disorderly behavior")
- Crowds of minor youth blending into adult crowds in the DORA, making it difficult for place managers to distinguish adults from underage youth.
- Incidents of assault involving firearms. Disorderly crowds and fighting.
- Reports of individuals bringing outside alcohol into the DORA, including the pedestrian plaza.
- Concerns about illegal parking and "car parties" occurring along Freedom Way and public streets bounding the DORA.
- Individuals parking in the Riverfront Garage traveling to-and-from personal vehicles to consume outside alcohol.
- Crowds of people gathering near illegally parked vehicles or in Smale Park will sometimes advance into the DORA in early morning hours.

CPTED, The Banks, 9/2023 22


REFINE LANDSCAPING



- Planters are too large and are blocking visibility in the area.
- Pruning or removal of the bushes is recommended.

CPTED, The Banks, 9/2023 24

ADDITIONAL LIGHTING



- Additional lighting on the steps from Marian Spencer to Mehring Way adjacent to the Schmidlapp stage is recommended to increase visibility.

Assessment

*This project is ongoing, with additional responses underway in 2025.