

Contra Costa County beefs up North Richmond patrol

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Collaboration and creative budgeting make for more police in North Richmond this summer, Contra Costa County leaders said Monday, announcing a development that also benefits neighbors of the crime-fraught enclave.

County Supervisor John Gioia and Sheriff Warren Rupf redirected funding and changed the purpose of some public safety dollars to create a contingent of patrol deputies assigned specifically to the neighborhood of 3,500, an amenity found in no other unincorporated community.

"The good people of North Richmond are 90 percent more likely to fall victim to violent crime than the residents of any other unincorporated area in Contra Costa County," Rupf explained.

The community generated more than 3,600 emergency calls during the first six months of 2009, better than one call per resident, records show. The sheriff's office documented more than 1,300 crimes there last year, including five killings.

The changes add three two-deputy patrol cars to North Richmond's usual mix, including at night when sheriff's staffing is thinnest. The augmented patrols are already in effect.

Previously the sheriff staffed a single "resident deputy" to North Richmond, assigned there full time. That deputy supplemented a patrol deputy who patrolled a beat that also includes the Rollingwood and East Richmond Heights neighborhoods.

Repeated, daylight gunfire prompted the Health Services department to contract for a full-time deputy specifically

for the county clinic on Third Street. The nearby Employment & Human Services Department followed suit, paying for a non-sworn sheriff's ranger for full-time security.

Contra Costa Housing Authority already paid for one deputy in its North Richmond projects, and redevelopment funds and a mitigation fee generated by the Golden Bear Transfer Station paid for a deputy to police illegal dumping.

Gioia solicited agreement from all parties to continue funding those positions for a broader patrol. Redevelopment and the dump fees will contribute an additional \$340,000 annually for two more deputies.