

# Ceres Dept. of Public Safety

# Staff Report



Art de Werk  
Chief of Police/Director of Public Safety  
Phone: 209 538-5726  
FAX: 209 538-5707  
email: [adewerk@ci.ceres.ca.us](mailto:adewerk@ci.ceres.ca.us)

---

TO: Ceres City Council

FROM: Art de Werk, Chief of Police/Public Safety Director

CO-PREPARERS: Mike Borges, Dan Davis, Brian Weber, Carissa Higginbotham, Allen McKay, Bryan Nicholes, Eric DeHart, Jeff Serpa, Jeff Higginbotham, Cheryl Carpenter

CC: Sheila Cumberland, Interim City Manager

SUBJECT: Ten-Year Staffing Plan for Fire and Police

DATE: February 24, 2006

## **Background**

The City of Ceres has grown substantially in terms of both its population and geography. As never before, the time is now to prepare a recommended public safety staffing plan for the next 10 years. Accordingly, staff has conducted in-depth research on demographic trends, economic issues, crime trends, firefighting challenges and medical service issues. We have also identified emerging trends relative to public service needs, the implications of terrorism-related issues, the potential for natural disasters, and various socio-economic issues which affect the community environment.

This report should prove assistive to the Council by providing information about the special demographic and social issues facing Ceres. The report makes use of “futures” forecasting techniques to gain insight into problems and issues that the next 10 years may present. More specifically, this report presents three Fire and Police division staffing scenarios for Council’s consideration during future years’ budget cycles.

## **Study Methodology**

The information presented in this report was obtained by researching various demographic statistics databases. We also used FBI statistics, California Department of Justice Crime statistics, Census Bureau data and City of Ceres Planning and Community Development statistics. Anecdotal and professional insights were obtained by nominal group technique which draws on the expertise of experienced staff to identify the most significant [five] emerging trends facing each of the two public safety disciplines.

## **Present Description of Ceres**

At this time, the city's official population is 39,560 ([see attachment 1](#)). In reality, our belief is that the city's population is somewhat higher than the official count owing to a trend where multiple families occupy one dwelling. Ceres shares similar demographic characteristics with its Central Valley counterparts. We have essentially three basic groups of people residing here. There are the long-time residents, who tend to view themselves as the biggest stakeholders in this community's future, and wield the most political influence owing to their involvement in local affairs and long-time residency here. The second group is comprised of the people who live here, but commute to the San Francisco Bay Area, South Bay Area, Sacramento, and other metropolitan areas. They do not participate in local affairs to the same extent as the long-time residents, but they hold high expectations of local government in terms of the scope and quality of services it provides. The third group is comprised of non-English speaking people. These people make up a large percentage of the population, are relatively underrepresented in local governmental affairs, and many are isolated because of language limitations. The two predominant languages spoken in this community are English and Spanish. This reflects the substantial cultural diversity of the population, and also makes the delivery of public services more difficult and resource-intensive, since the providing agencies must be able to [regularly] communicate in two different languages to the people served.

In terms of geographical area, the 2000 Census data shows that Ceres has approximately seven square miles within its perimeter. The City of Ceres has a substantial mixture of new and old housing developments, along with a commercial element that appears to be disproportionately smaller than in similar communities. Ceres has three major thoroughfares with very high volume traffic. Much of this traffic does not have a Ceres destination, yet it has a substantial impact on such things as quality of life (noise, pollution, and ease of travel), safety and emergency services. The Central Valley is one of the fastest growing regions in the state, while at the same time, it does not appear to have the same economic strengths as other regions experiencing similar growth.

## **Fire/Emergency Services Environment**

---

The Fire Division serves a population of approximately 50,000, covered by three fire stations, which are staffed with two firefighters each and are not uniformly distributed throughout the community. Approximately 4,400 calls are handled annually, 64% of which are medical “emergencies.” The remaining calls are for fires, traffic collisions, mutual aid to other communities, rescues, public assists and hazardous materials incidents ([see attachment 2](#)). On average, response times are 4.35 minutes for each call ([see attachment 3](#)). Our current firefighter staffing is only .42 per thousand population, which adversely affects public safety, firefighter safety and effectiveness in handling emergencies. Please see [attachment 4](#) for details and comparative analysis.

***Factors impacting the Fire Division services include:***

- Geographical/access impediments throughout the City. Highway 99, the rail lines and antiquated overpass configurations, etc., are examples of this.
- The Fire Division lacks 24/7 management (shift supervisors), which has a negative impact on firefighter safety and emergency scene management.
- Medical calls have become more complex and time/labor intensive owing to increased trends in drug-related/abuse (largely methamphetamine) ([see attachment 5](#)), aging population, patient obesity ([see attachment 6](#)), and calls featuring respiratory/cardiac problems.
- Lack of nearby hospitals to service the community result in engine companies having to leave the city to provide extended medical support.
- Multi-agency cooperative training activities are limited due to staffing.
- Engines leaving town to assist neighboring agencies and/or ambulance services (leaving only four firefighters in the city).
- Increased cell phone usage impacts the dispatch system, adding complexity and delays in handling calls.

## **Police Services Environment**

The Police Division serves a population of 40,000+ and for the year 2005 handled 55,866 calls. In 2001, the agency handled 36,234 calls ([see attachment 7](#)). The current per capita police officer staffing is 1.1 ([see attachment 8](#)). In 2004’s Part One Crimes ([see attachment 9](#)), Ceres ranked in California’s top 30 percentile for the number of violent and property crimes (#180 for violent crimes and #131 for property crimes) out of 711 reporting agencies.

***Factors impacting the Police Division services include:***

- 1.1 per capita staffing provides primarily for reactive responses to service requests, with a small amount of proactive enforcement and patrols ([see attachment 10](#)). We have implemented mail-in and online reporting, but
-

only investigate 45-55% of all cases that are forwarded to the detective bureau. Total cases assigned to detectives for investigation in 2005 was 794, which translates to an average of 66 cases per month. Responses to certain calls for service are delegated to non-sworn staff or designated as no response at all.

- Ceres ranks fourth in the county for violent and property crimes.
- The number of parolees supervised by the Ceres Parole Office is 970. Of this amount, 577 are active, meaning they are within the community. The remaining figure indicates parolees at large (avoiding contact with law enforcement), suspended (in custody for parole violations), or pending release to this community. The total number of parolees for Stanislaus County is 2,346; a small portion of this number also represents Tuolumne County, supervised by the Modesto office. The Ceres office alone is responsible for supervising 41% of all parolees in Stanislaus County. 21% of those parolees reside in the Ceres’ sphere of influence.
- Cultural/language challenges.
- Significant methamphetamine and marijuana production, usage, and trafficking in Stanislaus County.
- Economic and education levels of the Ceres population are indicators of possible criminal behavior and have a relationship to “quality of life” issues ([see attachment 11](#)). The latest available data shows that Ceres Unified School District has a dropout rate of 18.1 percent, while the state average is 13.1 percent. Please [see attachment 12](#) for further Ceres/California comparative information.
- Persons at or below the poverty level in Ceres is 12.9 percent (based on 2000 US Census data). The state average is 14.2 percent.

	<u>Ceres</u>	<u>Stanislaus County</u>	<u>California</u>
According to the 2000 US Census Bureau Data:			
High school graduates, percent of persons age 25+	67.0%	70.4%	76.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25+	8.3%	14.10%	26.6%
*Median household income	N/A	\$44,265	\$49,420
*Per capita money income	N/A	\$19,181	\$19,421
*Persons below poverty, percent	N/A	15.5%	13.3%
* 2004 Data from California Department of Finance			

## **Trends Affecting Fire Division**

---

1. **Continued increased calls for service.** As the population of the City grows the number of calls for service increases along with it. Industry standards and CAL-OSHA mandates indicate that we are substantially understaffed to properly provide services without outside agency assistance in a community this size. If outside assistance ceases or is unavailable, it would necessitate the near doubling of the number of on duty firefighters. A basic structure fire requires at least 17 firefighters (NFPA Standard 1710 – [see attachment 13](#)); we are limited to six firefighters with our present configuration.
2. **Diminishing outside agency assistance.** Other fire agencies are less able/willing to provide resources on a daily basis due to increased calls for service in their jurisdictions; furthermore, the policymakers in those jurisdictions are struggling with the practice of subsidizing smaller, less capable fire departments. Neighboring volunteer fire departments are also on the decline, thus they are less capable of providing assistance to our city.
3. **Increased traffic congestion.** Traffic congestion, more stop lights, through-traffic, collisions, islands, roundabouts, limited-access neighborhoods, and narrow streets are increasing our response time.
4. **Training mandates** (OSHA, NFPA, Regional Fire Authority, and Regional Medical Authority) diminish our ability to provide normal day-to-day service due to having to take personnel out of service to train; we need to backfill the stations that are out of service during training sessions.
5. **Natural/local disasters, communicable diseases, and increased threat of terror-related acts affect local government’s requirements for training and preparation.** Disaster preparedness for public safety staff and policymakers is a necessity and a legal requirement; we are struggling with the available staffing, time, and funding necessary to properly train for these events.

## **Trends Affecting the Police Division**

1. **Increasing city and county population** are resulting in increased calls for service, which limits or reduces service levels offered to community. Without increased staffing, levels of services (types of calls the police can respond to) are reviewed. The calls deemed “non-essential” will either be designated for delayed response, or in some instances, deemed “no-response” calls. Staffing limitations lead personnel to being primarily reactive to calls, rather than being proactive.
  2. **Increasingly dangerous environment for police to work in.** Within the last two years, this county’s growing gang population has placed additional demands on law enforcement resources. Drugged and crazed
-

suspects force law enforcement to increase the number of personnel assigned to these types of calls. Additionally, more suspects are willing to flee at any cost, which impacts both police and citizen safety. The number of suspects resisting arrest and assaults on police officers are increasing ([see attachment 14](#)).

3. **Overcrowding and limited jail space** results in the premature release of prisoners and detainees. This leads to the perception that there is limited or no significant punishment for criminal actions. This issue also forces the courts and District Attorney's office to triage its management of criminal complaints and leads to the perception that this county is soft on crime. This makes it important to shift greater emphasis on preventing crime, which requires more staffing resources.
4. **There are increased training requirements, documentation, and state-mandated forms** to maintain peace officer certification and to minimize liability. Staffing is impacted due to these training requirements, which translates to officers spending less time on patrol. These demands also increase overtime usage.
5. **Increasing racial and cultural diversity.** Ceres is a community in which the majority of inhabitants predominantly speak one of two (or both) languages: Spanish and English. Close to 40% of our population speaks Spanish with a large portion having no English-speaking capability. Multiple other languages are also spoken here, creating additional demands on staffing resources.

## **Police and Fire Divisions Staffing Recommendations**

### ***Police Division:***

These staffing scenarios are being offered for Council's consideration in three different categories. To spare the potential for complicated reading, please [see attachment 15](#) for costs associated with each scenario.

#### **1. Status Quo**

To maintain the minimum, which is characterized by our present situation, it will require a level of 1.1 sworn and .50 non-sworn per thousand population. We will need to continue to triage calls based on levels of seriousness and the availability of personnel to handle the calls.

To maintain this “status quo” figure, a total of 11 sworn officers and five non-sworn personnel will have to be added during the 2006 through 2015 period. These personnel additions apply only if the projected population increases are not exceeded (or not met).

The “status quo” scenario will require hiring 1.2 sworn officers per year and 1 non-sworn employee every other year.

Since the Status Quo scenario is less than desirable, we request that the City consider an “over-hire” practice which could help mitigate the negative staffing effects from vacant positions. Over-hiring will lead to substantial overtime savings. Staff will explain the details of “over-hiring” during the March 1, 2006 Council Study Session.

## **2. Improved**

To reach an “improved” staffing level of 1.3 sworn and .65 non-sworn per thousand in 2006 would call for the hiring (in addition to the our current authorized strength) of eight sworn officers and five non-sworn personnel in the first year alone. Council could consider using a phased-in approach which would lessen the yearly financial impact and take longer to implement.

The number of non-sworn personnel under this “improved” plan would provide us with sufficient support staff to assist patrol and investigation operations. We could explore providing expanded “open for business hours” and to provide other enhanced services to the community. The additional patrol officers would allow for increased staffing for all shifts, while expanding our command and supervisory levels, and ultimately provide the manpower to take a proactive approach to the problems facing our community.

## **3. Optimal**

To achieve the “optimal” staffing scenario, the staffing level of 1.5 sworn and .75 non-sworn per thousand in 2006 would call for the hiring (in addition to the our current authorized strength) of 16 sworn officers and 10 non-sworn personnel. Thus, it is our belief that the need to conduct a phasing-in similar to the plan outlined above.

The optimal staffing level meets the national recommended staffing level for police officers per capita. The added staff would translate into the department being able to fully engage the community in crime prevention activities; it would increase available proactive patrol time from an estimated 10 to 20 percent, which will result in more instances of crimes thwarted and earning this community the reputation of being much more difficult for criminals to ply their trade. Call response times will be significantly impacted for the better, the agency could form much-needed special crime fighting units for gang suppression and to address street crime activity. Traffic enforcement will also

benefit from the increased staffing. The aforementioned would combine for an overall safer community and improved quality of life.

### ***Fire Division:***

The Fire Division has been able to meet the spirit of OSHA requirements owing to neighboring agency support at fire scenes. If this outside agency support were to be substantially reduced or cease altogether, the number of firefighters in this agency would have to double. This is not a likely scenario, but there are some emerging signs that the issue of reduced outside agency support might become a serious problem.

A community's firefighting capabilities are generally measured using the Public Protection Classification, which is assigned by the Insurance Services Office (ISO). The Ceres Fire Division has excellent equipment, a fire station master plan, and professional personnel that qualified the organization for the current ISO rating of 3. To maintain the "3" rating, additional firefighter positions will need to be added each year to maintain the appropriate staffing ratio.

Please [see attachment 16](#) for costs associated with each of the following staffing scenarios.

#### **1. Status Quo**

On September 1, 2005 we achieved an ISO rating of 3. With two-person engine companies and three fire stations, we are not meeting National Fire Protection Association 1710 (NFPA) standards, which may cause the City to incur undesirable levels of liability in the event of a serious personal injury to a firefighter. Ceres Fire relies on outside agencies assistance while fighting fires to maintain compliance with OSHA 2 in/2 out safety requirements and the NFPA 1710 standards. Currently, we are in the design and staffing phase for Fire Station No. 4, with a projected opening of mid-summer, 2007. The new station will mitigate the staffing shortage to a certain extent and provide a definite improvement in response times to the northeast quadrant of the City.

#### **2. Improved**

To improve to an ISO rating of 2, and move this fire service into a position of being able to comply with OSHA and NFPA 1710 with its own resources, 27 additional firefighters will be needed. This would provide for much improved safety when fire personnel arrive on the scene of fires, immediately providing a complete firefighting contingent for the personnel and citizens, while greatly improving the chances for preventing serious property loss.

#### **3. Optimal**

---

To achieve an ISO rating of 1, the City would have to establish a minimum staffing level of 18 on-duty line personnel. 24 hours a day. To achieve the 18 firefighters per shift standard, it will require the addition of 30 new firefighters to the agency. The “optimal” staffing model does not substantially improve the agency’s capabilities as compared to the “improved” staffing scenario. Commercially would benefit from insurance savings, there would be greatly enhanced public education activities, fire prevention, inspections, hydrants maintenance, and other benefits. The ISO 1 rating also requires changes to the dispatching system, among other things. It would only be useful to further discuss this option if the City were to gain huge new revenues.

## **Revenue Generation Opportunities**

Ceres Public Safety staff realizes that finding the revenues required to staff the Fire and Police Divisions to more desirable levels presents a substantial challenge for the community. This, coupled with the need to also develop other services like parks, infrastructure, roads, etc., makes for an enormous challenge.

We studied the options to identify possible new funding sources, and to consider the feasibility of utilizing those sources. To conduct this evaluation, we selected participants from the various positions within the Public Safety Department and convened a “nominal group,” which was tasked with brainstorming the options, and then to consider what kind of support or opposition could be expected from the various community “stakeholders.” We have prepared charts reflecting the various revenue sources along with an analysis and collective opinion of the level of support there might be for those options.

The study group believes that several revenue-generating options need to be considered to help fund the staffing requirements for the next 10 years in public safety. These include a combination of increased developer fees, increasing the utility user tax, and increasing sales tax.

Staff conducted a stakeholder analysis in effort to determine the level of support that might exist for the options listed in the previous paragraph. It seems to us that these new fees/taxes might be successful provided an all-out effort is made to “sell” these initiatives with full participation of our fire and police employees, in particular. [See attachment 17](#) for stakeholder analysis chart. We stand ready and committed to doing so, and await Council’s direction on this matter.

## **Conclusion**

Staff presents this report with the objective of addressing future problems and to ensure the best possible services, given our community’s economic capabilities. We recognize

---

that the projected public safety staffing needs present a considerable challenge to this city government and to the paid staff as well. We are also fully cognizant that, despite the recent years of financial shortcomings, Council has managed to provide more officers, firefighters, equipment, facilities and training to help us perform our duties. We are most grateful for that, as we realize that it has been difficult for the Council, given the shortage of funds and the competing needs of the other City departments.