

Curfew

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In the case of Bourhis and her friends, the curfew did not apply; all of them are in their 20's.

"We shouldn't even be getting ID'd," remarked Matt, who declined to give his last name, as the trio were let past security and walked into the food court past the escalator.

But on that particular Friday, Aug. 25 — one of the unofficial last Fridays of the summer — the policy was being fully enforced. Police still patrolled the mall. Security still stopped young-looking patrons and asked for identification. Signs were plastered over entrances reminding patrons of the rule.

"We've seen an increase in large crowds of teens, essentially juveniles. ... The teens aren't just enjoying the property in shopping, dining and entertainment," Wesley Rebisz, senior general manager at Garden State Plaza, said during an April interview, when NorthJersey.com and The Record was the first to report on the curfew.

"They're being unruly, violating code of conduct, which can include running through the property in large groups, fighting and putting it on TikTok, basically disrupting business and making it uncomfortable for our everyday customers," Rebisz said.

But is the rule helping?

An investigation into records from the Paramus Police Department — in Garden State Plaza's hometown — shows the curfew has had mixed results.

Between the last weekend of April 2023, when the rule went into effect, and the last weekend of September, there were zero fights.

But there were also zero fights during that same time period in 2019, when the rule wasn't in effect.

Assaults and violent disputes still persisted in the mall this past summer, though those numbers ticked down from year to year.

Shopliftings and disorderly persons and group incidents were up, and there were still enough suspicious people, vehicles and other occurrences that police involvement was warranted.

Brian Higgins, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan and former chief of the Bergen County Police Department, said the spike in shoplifting at the mall was likely part of a larger national trend, which has seen the practice surge at malls and brick-and-mortar retailers across the country.

All incidents were down in 2020, when the mall was closed for several months due to the pandemic-related shutdown meant to halt the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

"Companies should be forced to really sort of think through these policies, because what is it that you're trying to prevent? Was this a moral panic type of a response?" said Jason Williams, an associate professor of justice studies at Montclair State University.

Many of the crimes that happened at the mall could be committed by a patron of any age, explained Williams.

Traffic incidents made up the bulk of police work at the mall throughout the year, ranging from accidents to traffic enforcement, police records show.

"You can't eliminate all crime," Higgins said.

Paramus Police Chief Robert Guidetti said that between April and Oct. 11 this year, there were six juvenile call complaints, compared with 28 during that same time period last year.

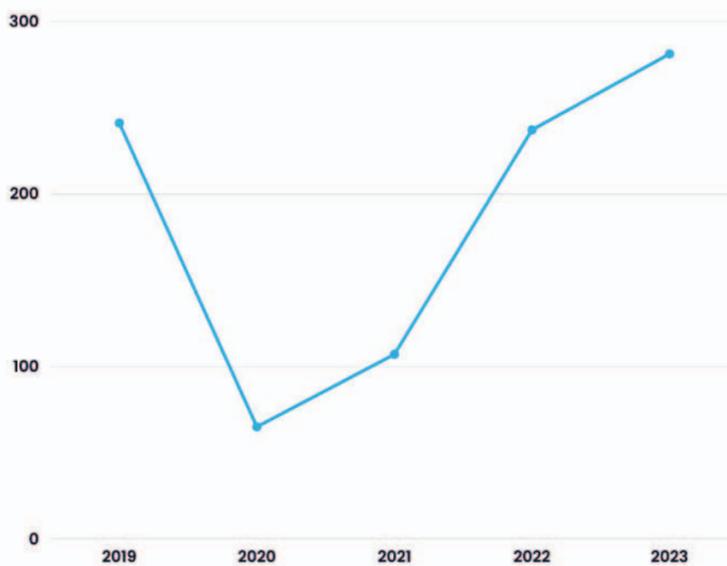
He called the policy "successful in



Traffic incidents made up the bulk of police work throughout the year at Garden State Plaza, police records show. NORTHJERSEY.COM FILE PHOTO

Shoplifting calls on the rise at Garden State Plaza mall

Police calls to investigate shoplifting have been on the rise at the Garden State Plaza mall, which recently introduced an adult chaperone program for teens on the weekends. Stats in 2020 dropped significantly because of the COVID pandemic. 2023 numbers are through Sept. 25.



Source: Paramus Police Department

achieving its goal of making the shopping center a safe, welcoming and fun environment for everyone."

"I have not heard one negative word about the policy," he wrote in an email. "[Tenants] all say that their patrons are still coming to the mall with less hesitation of a fight occurring."

Rebisz, the mall's senior general manager, characterized the policy as a success. And it will continue to be in effect

through the busy holiday shopping season.

"I still hear daily, especially on the weekend, I hear patrons say, 'Wow, it's so different here on the weekends,' in terms of a calm and fun environment," he said in a phone interview.

When asked about the unchanged crime statistics from 2023, Rebisz maintained that the mall's teen chaperone policy is bringing down "incidents

related to teenagers or anyone under the age of 18."

Do people find the mall safer?

Anecdotally, mall shoppers said Garden State Plaza has become more tame since the teen chaperone rule went into effect.

"There's not any more fights," said one shopper, Mia Fusco. Security hasn't been as stringent on the weekends with the policy, she added.

Jean Barbiera had heard of lax enforcement from his friends still in high school.

Rasheen Peppers Jr., a former mall employee, felt the policy was needed.

"I have seen a lot of the activity prior to the policy being put in place," he said. "A lot of young kids would come to the mall and would find a lot of trouble ... I worked at the mall when a fight broke out and a stampede broke out at the mall because everyone thought it was a gunshot, but it was a chair that fell."

But Williams, of Montclair State, said anecdotes about the policy working are just that: anecdotes.

"Without that strong data, without somebody recording every time, that could just be their perception," he said. "Did they just take a handful of incidents and come up with this sort of draconian policy that they can't prove works?"

Data showed large clusters of fight breakouts in the food court — an area one patron in April described as "New Jersey's biggest boxing ring."

Most fights broke out on weekends and in the evenings, according to a review of police records. Disorderly activity was seen more on the weekends.

"I think it needs more time," said Higgins, the former Bergen County police chief. "But I anticipate throughout the holiday season you're going to see its real intent."

"I anticipate you're going to see a more significant impact reflected in the statistics," he added.

Email: munozd@northjersey.com ; Twitter: @danielmunoz100

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NOW THE REST OF THE STORY! <https://clerk.house.gov> DC Office: (202) 225-4465 Website: Gottheimer.house.gov

H.R. 497 FORCED VACCINATION THIS BILL WOULD NOT PERMIT AGENCIES LIKE HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AND CONGRESS TO MANDATE FORCED VACCINES IN DIRECT VIOLATION OF THE CONSTITUTION. (VOTED NO)

H.R. RES. 7 TERMINATE COVID-19 NATIONAL EMERGENCY CANNOT SUSPEND THE CONSTITUTION BY DECLARING NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY. ARTICLE 1 SECTION 1. (VOTED NO)

H.J. RES. 30 ESG FIDUCIARY RULE ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL & CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CHECKS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION WITH RADICAL WOKE UNITED NATIONS AGENDA 2030. INCLUDING LGBT & RADICAL ENVIRONMENT RULES (VOTED NO)

H.R. RES. 27 FEDERAL WATER RULE STOP EPA AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL ON WATER BODY REGULATIONS THAT WOULD IMPOSE STRICT PERMITS AND PENALTIES ON FARMERS AND DEVELOPERS. (VOTED NO)

H.R. 2617 OMNIBUS SPEND BILL ADDS 2 TRILLION TO DEFICIT. (VOTED YES) REVENUES WILL AMOUNT TO 5 TRILLION WITH OVER 7 TRILLION SPENDING in '23

H.R. 2670 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT IT RETURNS THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO STRENGTHEN MILITARY READINESS, IMPROVES LETHALITY OF ARMED FORCES & PROHIBITS TAXPAYER MONEY TO FUND EXPENSES FOR ELECTIVE ABORTIONS. IT ALSO PROHIBITS TAXPAYER GENDER AFFIRMING CARE, INCLUDING SURGERIES AND HORMONE TREATMENTS. FOCUSES ON SECURITY OF USA. (VOTED NO)

H.R. 5377 INFLATION REDUCTION ACT. BELIES THE NAME. DOES NOTHING BUT INCREASES INFLATION, WITH AN ADDITIONAL 80 BILLION DOLLARS TO HIRE 87 THOUSAND IRS AGENTS AND GROSSLY OVERSPENDS ON BADLY PLANNED ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS. RESULT: AN ADDITIONAL 1.38 TRILLION DOLLARS TO THE DEFICIT. (VOTED YES)

H.R. 5376 BUILD BACK BETTER, H.R. 3684 INFRASTRUCTURE BILL, H.R. 1319 CORONAVIRUS APPROPRIATIONS. THIS IS UNCHECKED SPENDING WHICH "BUDGET.HOUSE.GOV" ESTIMATES WILL ADD 10 TRILLION TAXPAYER DOLLARS TO THE CURRENT DEFICIT. THIS INCLUDES, BILLS ON GENDER IDENTITY, & CLASS AUTO MILEAGE TAX PLAN. DEFICITS BY 2030 COULD REACH 40 TRILLION TAXPAYER DOLLARS OR AS HIGH AS 45 TRILLION, WITHOUT INTEREST. TAX & SPEND! (VOTED YES)

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