



MIDTOWN PONCE SECURITY ALLIANCE

Bedford Pine Report 1/31/2008

CONTACTING LEGISLATORS

Our last Eye on Midtown focused on the Bedford Pine issue in light of a recent shooting. Many people needed legislator addresses so we rounded up the addresses for state legislators. Below is a **fresh** version of the Bedford Pine background information. Intown neighborhoods need significant political support in achieving a desirable transformation of the Bedford Pine area.

Please write to both your state and federal lawmakers serving Midtowners, urging assistance in addressing this adverse component of our community.

- **Federal** – go to congress.org, enter your zip code in the upper left corner, and go to the webforms of our Congressional lawmakers. This website also has a feature to write to all of them at once. Because of Homeland Security issues e-mail addresses are not available for them.
- **State:** nan.orrock@senate.ga.gov, edward.lindsey@house.ga.gov, mthomas@legis.state.ga.us, kathyashe56@mindspring.com, pat@patgardner.org, margaret.kaiser@house.ga.gov . You can also contact our state legislators via congress.org all at once using a webform.
- **Please don't merely forward them this newsletter.** Offer your own insights, observations, and feelings about this situation – in about two or three good paragraphs.
- We do not have “templates” because form letters are not effective.

BACKGROUND NOTES ON THE BEDFORD PINE SITUATION

An off-duty police officer working for the MPSA's patrol on January 24th heard gunfire at the southern edge of our service area and immediately investigated the situation. She found that someone had been shot at 640 Boulevard. As she approached the 640 building she noticed a suspicious male walking away from the scene and toward the 657 Boulevard building.

Once the suspected culprit and his accomplice saw the police officer coming into the 657 building they unsuccessfully attempted to flee. The officer immediately arrested the pair on felony charges including aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. The suspects, Tony C. of 398 Parkway Drive, and Curmetrius P. of 333 Angier Avenue, remain in the Fulton County Jail without bond. A handgun likely used in the shooting was recovered at the building at which the subject tried to flee.

We wish to highlight that all addresses mentioned above - the home addresses claimed by the subjects, the location of the shooting, and the location of arrest - are part of the Bedford Pine Section 8 housing project. The Fulton County property book (available online at www.fultonassessor.org) lists each of these buildings as one of six phases of “Bedford Pine Apartments.” Wingate Management, a subsidiary of Continental Wingate in Needham, Massachusetts, operates the Bedford Pine project.

The drug market along Parkway Drive and Boulevard revolves around the Bedford Pine Apartments. In the 5 years that the MPSA has served the Midtown community we have come to understand that this drug market – we would dare call it an area of insurgency – drives much of the crime in our neighborhood, and plays a significant role in the extreme levels of vagrant activity by keeping them near their drug source.

A significant amount of Atlanta's street drug market flows through Bedford Pine and surrounding area. Many street criminals come into the surrounding neighborhoods - including ours - to break into cars, homes, and businesses, rob people, pursue prostitution and other crimes and then go down there to fence stolen items and buy drugs. Drugs dealers have keys to all the buildings, recruit children as lookouts, and residents generally do not let the police into the building when they respond to 911 calls. Midtowners often see area prostitutes enter and remain in these buildings.

This arrangement is detrimental and dangerous for all those affected – the innocent residents who genuinely need public assistance and the surrounding neighborhoods. Criminals preying on all of us are clearly abusing this housing project, its residents, and the community in general.

The Bedford Pine project comprises around 73 buildings with 732 apartment units in total, and around 2000 residents officially living there (correction to our previous reports based on an article in the *Daily Report*). Corporations like Wingate have a contract with the federal government which sets a rate on units. Theoretically, a tenant pays a portion of their income as rent, and the federal government subsidizes the rest of the contract rate for the tenant's unit. Many in the community believe that Wingate pursues zero-income tenants. It is logistically easier to get one big check from Uncle Sam at contract intervals rather than track down 732 tenants for some minor portion and then get a check for the rest of the contract rate.

In reality this form of concentrated poverty operates with few checks and balances to ensure a safe and stable residential community. Because many tenants have little to no income except perhaps food stamps and welfare, many single mothers living there will slip in sub-tenants who are often drug dealers. For the past several months we have even seen luxury cars belonging to able-bodied males clearly living in a Bedford Pine building much of the time.

The Atlanta Housing Authority is about to tear down its remaining properties, and Bedford Pine needs to follow suit. Residents of the AHA properties in genuine need will be issued vouchers for safer and more suitable housing. In the past the Atlanta Housing Authority gave way to redevelopment, **which also incorporated mixed-income into that concept**. Mixed income is certainly desirable in the redevelopment of the Bedford Pine area because it not only provides a significantly safer environment for those in need, but also works as a good influence on them. An inordinate concentration of poverty coupled with social instability adversely affect all in the community.

Last October the Daily Report reported that Continental Wingate has vigorously resisted developers interested in buying and transforming that area into a more livable component of the intown community. This article is still online at http://www.dailyreportonline.com/Editorial/News/new_singleEdit.asp?individual_SQL=10%2F24%2F2007%4017417_Public_.htm. Our Federal tax dollars need to stop funding this major crime generator for intown Atlanta, which in turn inhibits economic progress especially along the Ponce de Leon Avenue and Boulevard corridors. This community transformation needs to happen before someone else gets shot. We want Ponce and Boulevard to transform from criminal havens to showcase streets enhancing the intown experience!

- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance

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