



MIDTOWN PONCE SECURITY ALLIANCE

Eye on Midtown – 5/04/2008

WITH MUCH GRATITUDE FOR OUR COMMUNITY PATROL SPONSORS

Midtown Neighbors' Association

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BUSINESS MEMBERS!!!**

MAY SAFETY MEETING

The next safety meeting will be on May 12, 2008 (7pm at Mary Mac's as always). Sharon Latners, the Communications Officer for the Atlanta Police, has graciously accepted our invitation to speak to the Midtown community about the 911 system. She has been with the department for 18 years. The discussion will focus on making 911 calls effectively and efficiently.

APD and MPSA Patrol will be on hand with their respective updates.

THE VALUE OF MPSA MEMBERSHIP

The May renewal notices have gone out. Because spring is crunch time for us, it is important that we get our renewals on time. We are seeing an uptick in vagrant activity, which inevitably generates petty crimes in our neighborhood. A batch of criminals – many of whom have been involved with Midtown car break-ins in the past - have recently been released from prison, and research on recent entries to our watch list is turning up more serious criminal records.

A combination of things are needed to combat the presence of street criminals – like monitoring certain court cases, cataloguing problematic individuals, communications with the community, and the formation of the block watch program. The patrol, however, is the backbone of our neighborhood security blueprint. The shortage in police coverage,

combined with the city budget crisis, permanently necessitates a neighborhood security patrol. We depend on ongoing financial support from the residents, businesses, and community sponsors to maximize public safety and security in our neighborhood.

The good news in all this is that the presence of a neighborhood patrol cuts down on the number of street criminals hanging around the neighborhood, and suppresses the bad elements that do continue to roam and loiter in the neighborhood. While conditions along Ponce are not optimal, the criminal elements venture into the neighborhood much less nowadays than before we started 5 years ago. The epicenter of the street prostitution is shifting away from the MPSA service area, and the bulk of these criminals tend to stay well west of Juniper Street. And we know much more about the chronic undesirable individuals now than we did before – this will help us formulate strategies for addressing them in the future. Our neighborhood depends on maintaining this momentum.

Please also encourage your neighbors to join! A lot of folks still have not joined the MPSA. In the long the MPSA Patrol plays an instrumental role in bringing our beautiful neighborhood to new heights.

SGT. COOPER'S CORNER*

We wish to reiterate our request that property owners **regularly** check their grounds – especially in and around outbuildings and alleyways - for deposits of stolen goods, materials used in criminal and drug activity, and signs of urban camping. Summer is effectively here, and we critically need to identify signs of trouble as early as possible. If you observe patterns of specific undesirable individuals roaming or loitering in the neighborhood send us the best documentation practical so we can more effectively identify and monitor them.

For suspicious and criminal activity in progress always call 911 first, and then call the patrol hotline. After police come and take appropriate action please write to us at first convenience. Be sure to ask for police report numbers before officers leave so we can follow up as needed.

Car break-ins are hitting us hard right now. Do not leave valuable items in your car - even for brief periods. If you leave GPS devices, cameras, tollway change, etc in plain view please break that habit right

now. One recent car break-in occurred in a 15-minute time span that the car was left unattended on Myrtle Street - the culprit made off with a GPS device, digital camera, and some other items during broad daylight.

Check your outdoor lighting. Porch lights should be left on at night. Now that the beautiful trees are in full foliage, street lighting is compromised. Porch lights help increase lighting and discourage undesirable traffic at night. Lighting in side or rear should have motion sensors. **MPSA Note: Report any street lights malfunctioning to Georgia Power at 888-891-0938. If there are dangerously dark spots on your street, let us know about those. The Midtown Neighbors' Association plans to fund additional lights on our streets to increase safety.**

**Sgt. Bill Cooper is our patrol coordinator, who retired last year from APD after 25 long years of service among Atlanta's Finest. He is now your "neighborhood cop."*

EXAMPLE OF HOW MPSA WORKS IN THE BACKGROUND

While we have long security reports about the neighborhood, there is much that we never tell you about going on in the background. In reviewing our "intel" files, we found a major success story.

Early in summer of 2007, we began receiving reports of drug activity at a particular address. At all hours of the day, suspicious traffic was going in and out of this house. Residents, police, and MPSA Patrol observed loitering on the block, a part of the neighborhood where you do not normally see that sort of thing. We were seeing a pattern of crime stats suggesting that car break-ins and possibly a robbery or two could have been attributed to that drug activity. Within weeks, the situation came to a head so we called a special closed meeting with residents in the immediate vicinity, officials at the Atlanta Police Department, and MPSA Patrol.

As a result of that meeting, the house and its occupants was put under surveillance. Residents submitted photos, video, and logs of the activity there to the police and to us. Police even made visits to residents in that immediate vicinity as a community service feature. The neighbors did not want a dramatic take-down - they just wanted the dangerous activity to stop so that the owner could get help.

The turn-around came much faster than we anticipated. Police responding to a domestic dispute

ended up finding reason to search the house for drugs. Canine units found a small quantity of cocaine and paraphernalia in the house, and the police officers on the scene arrested the owner and two occupants.

After that, the suspected drug activity stopped, the owner sold his house, and is said to have moved out-of-state. The new owner of house is one of our newest members. In the end we are very happy to report that address moving from our watch list to our membership roster.

MESSAGE FROM ANNE FAUVER: HOSTING TOWN HALL MEETING

I am holding a Town Hall meeting Tuesday, May 6 from 7-9pm at Inman Middle School, Park Drive and Virginia Ave. Doors will open at 6:30. If you have a service problem that you want help on Sheila and I will be available at that time.

You know that the city's budget has an approximately \$65 million deficit for '07-'08 and a \$140+ million projected deficit for '08-'09 unless we take drastic measures.

Council will get the administration's budget May 1. By code we must pass it by June 16. As your elected official I want you to have the budget information as soon as possible after we get it. During May we will interview Commissioners and get information on the impact their budget will have on services.

Budget cuts, service cuts, and a possible tax hike are VERY IMPORTANT to all of us. Right up front I want you to know that I OPPOSE A PROPRTY TAX RATE INCREASE. The ONLY way I would vote for it would be if our services would be cut so deeply that our quality of life is very poor.

The administration will make personnel cuts the first week in May prior to any review Council can do of the budget. I have no idea how the personnel cuts will affect services. The COO Greg Giornelli, the CFO Janice Davis and the City Attorney Beth Chandler will be at the meeting.

Public hearings on the budget are scheduled for the following dates:

- *Thursday, May 8th @7:00p.m. Old City Council Chambers, 68 Mitchell St.*
- *Thursday, May 15th @7:00p.m. City Council Chambers, 55Trinity Ave.*

If our office can help contact Sheila or myself: 404-330-6049 or afauver@atlantaga.gov

JUNIOR CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY

The Atlanta Police will conduct a Junior Police Academy from June 9th to 13th. This program is aimed at students from 12 to 15 years of age. The class will offer:

- Physical training of officers (obstacle course)
- Review of Criminal Justice System and Juvenile Court
- Tour 9-1-1
- Firearms safety
- K-9/Bomb robot Demonstration
- Mock Traffic Stops and MUCH MORE

Sign up at www.atlantapd.org or call 404-209-5250.

WATCH LIST

A handful of specific problematic individuals, including Kenneth Lamb, are being monitored closely. We are always in need of court watch volunteers. It is a matter of time before another one from the "red list" is arrested, and some kinds of court cases come up on very short notice. We keep a separate mailing list for court watch volunteers. If you can be available at times on short notice, next day, etc., to attend court sessions please let us know.

We currently monitor several properties in the area for possible vagrant and criminal activity. Keep your fingers crossed that our collaboration with Code Enforcement will sustain despite the city budget crisis.

A handful of Midtowners attended the court hearing for the owners of 292 9th Street, and gave us this report: *The building was found to be in compliance with the boarding order and the case is closed pending payment of fines and fees. The owner has six months from today to begin construction. Judge Jackson asked the owner if he intended to rehab or rebuild, and the owner replied "rehab." It was all over pretty quickly.*

After the conclusion of the hearing Judge Jackson called the three of us up and spent several minutes

thanking us for our involvement and vigilance and reminding us that the owner had six months to get construction going on the building. The solicitor did the same. Judge Jackson knew that there were many people who had come to the various hearings and he wanted us all to know that he appreciated our time and effort. He is truly an advocate for our neighborhood and his court should be thanked for its work.

One resident spoke with the owner of the building after the proceedings and asked him if he would take care of the trash on the property. Mr. Jordan said that he would and that he would be cutting the grass soon too.

Just when we thought the public security aspects were probably taken care of for a good while, a neighbor ran off some street people at that location. According to our informant, the undesirables said they were "looking for work" but look more like they were attempting to steal from the building (suspicion of stealing copper tubing).. They tore one of the boards covering a door. This has been reported to the patrol and code enforcement.

Anyone seeing any suspicious activity should call 911 immediately, and then the MPSA Patrol. At next convenience write to us about it, with police report numbers if applicable. The building is "placarded," meaning that police can arrest anyone found there for trespassing. At any rate we have our calendars marked for October 31st, when work on this eyesore should be well underway.

As an aside, theft of copper has become a big crime in this country. A couple interesting articles on this phenomenon:

- <http://www.kvbc.com/Global/story.asp?S=5109520>
- <http://www.thecitizen.com/~citizen0/node/22576>

**STAY SAFE AND KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN!
Please encourage your fellow Midtowners to join the MPSA!**

- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance