

DECEMBER SAFETY MEETING RECAP

Some 25-30 people attended the monthly safety meeting moderated by Peggy Denby. As our special guest we had Lt. Rasmussen of the APD Vice Unit on hand to discuss recent vice stings and prostitution trends. Residents in condo buildings backing up to Cypress Street were quite vocal about the volume of public disorder in that area – not only street prostitution, but also loitering, littering, and menacing conduct. At the end of the meeting the waiter at Mary Mac's working our meeting room poignantly told how Sgt. Cooper helped him snap out of his life of drugs on the streets of Midtown.

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM MAJOR WILLIAMS

Major Williams sent us this announcement: *Good evening, as a result of an increase in crime occurring within the Northeast quadrant of Atlanta (Zones 2, 5, and 6), please ensure that our supervisory staff patrols the residential area, during their shift – this allows more police presence within the area. As day-light fades, please ensure that our patrol efforts are enhanced by our personnel activating their blue lights and patrol at slower speeds, during the evening and night hours. We have to address ALL suspicious activity and find the purpose why non-residents are within the area!*

Major Williams commands Zone 5 of the Atlanta Police Department, the area encompassing Midtown, Downtown, Old Fourth Ward, and in-between.

MIDTOWN MUGGER

- He's still out there somewhere...

CRIME TRENDS

According to the August 2008 Uniform Crime Reporting document for Zone 5 published by the Atlanta Department, Year-to-date violent crimes have decreased a little bit. Robberies, for example, are down by 6%. However this report shows a serious increase in property crimes during the first 8 months of the year compared to the same period in the previous year. In Zone 5, which includes Midtown and the downtown area, residential burglaries shot up by 17%. Car break-ins increased by only 4%.

Interesting to note, property crimes increased more dramatically as you head toward Suburbia. In Zone 2, which encompasses the Buckhead area, burglaries increased by 21%, and 83% more cars were broken into during the first 8 months of 2008 compared to the same period in 2007.

At the December safety meeting, Lt. McGee announced that Part I crimes (defined by the FBI as criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary/breaking and entering, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson) were down in the last 28 days, and even by double digits for the last 7 days. We certainly welcome this news at a time when the community has become more vocal about crime in recent months.

PUBLIC ORDER

"Quality of life" issues remain a problem. Residents around Cypress Street report seeing more transvestite and male hustlers, and were vocal about this at the December safety meeting. Male hustlers tend to hang out closer to the 10th Street end of Cypress Street, while the transvestite

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variant take over the lower end of that street. East of Peachtree, far fewer prostitutes have been observed in recent months – we attribute this trend to the MPSA Patrol and proactive countermeasures on the part of residents.

Lt. Rasmussen spoke to Midtowners at the December safety meeting. The Vice Unit operates strictly undercover and works in various problem areas around the city. In Midtown, they conduct details in both major prostitution hotspots - the area centered around Cypress Street, and the Ponce & Boulevard area. They send an undercover officer to drive around in a car, who then picks up a prostitute flagging him down. Once the prostitute's conduct meets certain elements of a vice arrest, the undercover officer takes the offender to a designated round-up point where they are handcuffed and prepared for prosecution.

The Vice Unit has arrested 300 individuals so far this year, including 170 male hustlers and transvestite prostitutes. They prosecute most cases in the Atlanta Municipal Court for offenses that carry a maximum of six months in jail (they are not exactly sent to Siberia). Neighborhood watch efforts have proven more difficult in municipal court primarily because of the fast pace of proceedings. Most of those prosecuted in Municipal Court have a hearing at 8am the very next morning, and those cases tend to be quickly resolved with a small fine at that point. Once we are able to implement an effective court watch program for municipal cases, longer jail sentences will become more likely.

Vagrants continue to plague the greater area, with frequency and prevalence increasing with proximity to the Peachtree Pine shelter. Major Williams pointed out at a recent safety meeting for NPU-M (neighborhoods south of us) that APD receives the heaviest concentration of service calls at the corner of Piedmont and North Avenue (Publix and Walgreen's) than anywhere else in the precinct. Sgt Cooper was called out of the Safety Meeting three times last Monday night because of vagrants causing serious problems at Mary Mac's - he had to arrest one of them.

REPORT FROM MIDTOWN MINI-PRECINCT

LT McGee reported the following activity for the Midtown Mini-precinct in the 30 days leading up to the safety meeting (not including the great many more regular police coverage stats):

- 49 arrests
- 37 traffic citations - mostly resulting from road blocks mentioned below
- 55 traffic safety checks (roadblocks)
- 1906 calls for service via 911
- 739 Directed patrols (meaning that people in the community requested that the police check certain places at certain times).
- 34 field interviews (of suspicious persons).

COURT WATCH

The two surviving of the "Three Burglars," Timothy Kozak and Jonathan Wells (erroneously booked as Jonathan Williams) will appear in court on Friday (12/12) at 9:30am, in court room 5F before Judge Glanville. Kozak and Wells were charged with burglary along with the now-deceased Michael McGuire in an August incident. Kozak has additional charges from burglaries in Virginia Highland. Another burglary defendant from unrelated incidents, Bobby Perry, will appear at that time. According to Community Prosecutor Sharla Jackson, the cases are on for a status hearing, but the defendants may enter pleas at that time. The Fulton County District Attorney will pursue a lengthy prison sentence for Timothy Kozak due to his extensive criminal history.

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We maintain a special list of potential court watch volunteers. If you have a chance to attend this or possibly other hearings in the future, please have us add you to that list. Court hearings often crop up on short notice, so the more people we can draw from, the better chance we have of bringing a handful of neighborhood observers when cases of interest appear. It has been our experience in cases involving felonies that judges take notice of residents appearing during court cases, and this practice ensures that neighborhood concerns are given consideration especially in sentencing.

PEACHTREE PINE UPDATE

Debi Starnes, the Mayor's policy advisor on homeless issues, told us and media outlets that the Gateway Center has a plan in place to accommodate the 700 individuals said to be staying at the Peachtree Pine "shelter" even if the water is not shut off for good. This fact alone renders Peachtree Pine and its ongoing negative impact upon the community a totally unnecessary obstruction to Atlanta's homeless outreach and rehabilitation efforts.

MPSA PATROL REPORT

Quick Numbers

- 19 calls for service via 911
- 7 calls for service via MPSA member hotline
- 24 parking tickets issued in the upper Myrtle area
- 10 arrests

Arrest log

- **11/16** - DUI near 10th & Monroe
- **11/18** - DUI (location unclear)
- **11/21** - Pedestrian in Roadway (noted prostitute in Poncetown)
- **11/23** - Urinating in public in upper Myrtle area
- **11/26** - Criminal trespass
- **11/28** - Drinking in public at Ponce & Kennesaw
- **11/28** - Fight call in 900 block of Monroe
- **11/30** - Bar-related fight at 10th & Piedmont
- **12/04** - Disorderly conduct
- **12/05** - reason unclarified as of this writing

Patrol log highlights

- **12/01** - An area business was burglarized while Sgt. Cooper was in close proximity. The business only had a silent alarm, and police dispatch held the call for 30 minutes. Sgt. Cooper strongly urges the use of audible alarms only - silent alarms enhance a subject's ability to flee without notice from potential witnesses. With the upcoming furloughs (due to city budgetary issues), response times will likely increase. We can expect low priority calls to be held longer.
- **11/12** - Vehicle overturned at 5th & Myrtle after striking a parked car.
- Beltline corridor looks great after the big clean-up on November 8th. The Kudzu is dying off, thereby enhancing visibility among brush and exposing new campsites.

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MPSA MAILBAG - 1 item

I want to report a burglary at my condo. It occurred last night between 6:10pm and 10:15 PM on December 4th. I called the police, they made a report but no fingerprints could be found. Our condo building is a small building with only 12 condos in the building. There is a key pad on the exterior door to the building. For someone to get in, they would have to know the code or someone in the building would have had to let the burglar in. At any rate, the burglar got inside the building and found my two spare keys – one for my car and one for my door - on top of my door ledge. He let himself in, stole the laptop and nothing else. Of course this person still has my keys so I had a 24 hour locksmith come out and change the locks on my condo doors and my car is at the Toyota dealer getting new door, trunk, and ignition locksets.

I am sure as you read the above paragraph you see how exposed I left myself. I had the keys on my ledge as I had locked myself out 2 times over the past 2 years and thought that the convenience of having spare keys was important. I let this priority over ride the need for security. After all, no one had ever broken in my house and my door is inside an entrance which has a security key pad. I also have an alarm system which was not armed. Since I got my second dog this summer, I knew that the motion detector could not be used. What I failed to do, until last night, was call ADT to ask them how to arm the system not using the motion detector. It was easy.

I am relaying this story to you because it reiterates how important it is not to let our guard down. I read your security reports but still I felt safe just because nothing had ever happened to me. Even though I am embarrassed for being so naïve, I don't mind if you share this story with others. Maybe there is just one other person out there that is not taking necessary precautions and my story can help him or her.

Thank you for writing about break glass sensors in the Oct 6th burglary story – I didn't know that existed. I have contacted ADT to add that to my security system since a motion detector is no longer an option for me. Thank you for all the good work you do!

BE SAFE AND BE OBSERVANT! And please urge your neighbors to join and support the MPSA...

- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SPONSORS WHO PROVIDE A MAJOR ENHANCEMENT TO YOUR PATROL'S EFFECTIVENESS:

Midtown Neighbors Association

The Sembler Company | Post Parkside | Midtown Tire, Inc. | Ackerman & Company

AND THE MANY RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS MEMBERS OF THE MPSA

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