



MIDTOWN PONCE SECURITY ALLIANCE

August 2006 Public Safety Report

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Monday September 11: Midtown Public Safety Meeting

- 7pm at Mary Mac's

SPECIAL PUBLIC SAFETY MEETING

On August 7th we held a special safety meeting to address the recent spike in crime incidents. Major Hagin, Commander of Atlanta Police Zone 5, discussed with a group of about 95 Midtowners about a number of public safety topics..

Crime Stats: Major Hagin shared year-to-date crime statistics for the Zone 5 sub-area comprised of Midtown and Ansley Park. 2006 YTD crime is down compared to the same time last year. According to the handouts, overall crime levels are about the same. In the key crimes monitored by MPSA (Robbery, Burglary, and Auto Thefts), APD stats show a decline in the greater Midtown area - burglaries down by 5%, robbery down by 18%, and auto theft by 2%.

In the MPSA sub-area of this statistical area,

- Robberies were up from 4.66 incidents per month in 2005 to 5.28 incidents in year-to-date 2006.
- Burglaries were down from an average of 4.5 incidents per month to 4.0 year-to-date in 2006
- Car thefts are up dramatically from 5 cars stolen per month in 2005 to 8.57 cars stolen year-to-date 2006

While the greater area shows a decline in these crimes in the greater Midtown area, we have experienced a concentration in our area. August figures are not in as of this writing.

APD goal is to reduce overall crime by 5% annually.

Bedford Pine: The open-air drug market along the Boulevard and Parkway Drive corridor was among the topics discussed. Recent crack-downs by APD have reduced drug-dealing in that area. The area is dominated by project-based Section 8 housing operated by Wingate Management. Many in the community believe that this housing project plays a large role in the presence of these drug markets, and furthermore, that it contributes heavily to area crime problems.

Wingate has renewed their contract with the federal government. The 73 buildings comprising 750 units are in six different phases, each with a different contract date. The contracts run for 5 years at a time, with renewal dates ranging from July 2005 to July 2006. The contract expiration for all six phases now range from mid-2010 to mid-2011.

Relatively few violent crimes are reported in that area. This could be attributed to several factors:

- The perpetrators of crime in other areas will not normally commit crimes close to home.
- The fear factor among residents in that area – many will not report drug and gang activity, and other crimes to the police out of fear for their safety.

Over the years we have heard many reports that drug dealers have keys to many of the buildings, yet police are unable to get in when they need to. Again, the fear factor among residents comes into play.

A serious law-enforcement challenge in and around that area seems to be locked in for quite some time to come.

Prostitution: Since the beginning of July Atlanta Police, MPSA Patrol, Midtown Blue have aggressively conducted prostitution details. The prostitutes are generally, though still not always, staying on or near Peachtree, and away from Piedmont. The challenge remains to get them out of the area completely.

It is believe that activists are posing as decoys for criminal rights groups. They will walk down the street as prostitute look-alikes and others, recording any police officers when they interview them. As always prostitutes file fictitious complaints at APD Internal Affairs.

Occasionally a new prostitute from another city appears in the area. Prostitutes often work a "circuit" – moving from one city to the next. They move around usually because they are either wanted by the law, or they are running from someone else.

Sgt. Miller, MPSA Coordinator, believes we have a few new ones working the scene.

Cameras: Midtown Blue operates 12 public security cameras in Midtown, mainly in the Peachtree corridor. Additionally, many buildings and facilities in the area have private security cameras. Because Atlanta Police keeps a listing of those, they can often pull archived tapes to help solve crimes and identify suspects.

Mini-Precinct: The deal whereby the Midtown Mini-Precinct was to move into the Bellsouth facility at West Peachtree and 5th Street fell through because of ATT purchasing Bellsouth.

The precinct needs approximately 5000 square feet of space and 35 parking spaces. If anyone knows about available space in Midtown, or has any ideas regarding space for the Midtown Precinct, please let us know. It is important to keep the Precinct in the area.

911 Issues: Zone 5, which includes Downtown and Midtown, receives 13,000 calls for service (via 911 system) per month, around 8000 of which are in Midtown alone. The 200 police officers in Zone 5 are clearly staying busy.

The City is planning the implementation of the 311 concept found in other cities. In those cities, one calls 911 for emergencies and crimes in progress only, and 311 for non-emergencies (including crimes completed where the suspect is no longer in the area).

Two interesting articles explain the 311 concept.

- <http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2002/03/05/usat-311.htm>
- http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view.a,1237,q,547613,mpdcNav_GID,1554.asp

The MPSA recently published a report about how Atlanta's 911 system works, available for download at www.midtownponce.org/news

HIDTA: The Atlanta Police is a member of the HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area). The HIDTA is a federal program design to enhance public safety in high crime areas. They work high level drug interdiction and investigation in all areas of the City. They work with the APD as a whole rather than directly with the zones. More information from their website at www.atlantahidta.org

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Speaking of drugs, residents suspecting drug activity in their immediate vicinity can report it by calling the Atlanta Police Drug Hotline at (404) 853-3444. If it is an emergency please call 911. Additionally, the MPSA will forward information to APD, with anonymity assured.

Police Staffing: There was discussion about police turnover. In recent months APD has lost about as many as they hired. While the population has grown, police coverage has not. The Midtown Precinct, for example, has 25 officers and needs 55 officers to be fully staffed. This is a very serious problem for us all.

AUGUST SAFETY MEETING

The regular safety meeting was held on August 14th, with 32 residents in attendance

Nancy Boxill, Commissioner for Fulton County District 6, was our special guest. Discussion at this meeting centered around the following topics:

- The Fulton County Sheriff's Department as it regards the Fulton County Jail
- The results of her meetings with several area churches and the chairperson of the Commission on Homelessness.
- How Fulton County government can help us with public safety issues affecting the neighborhood.

FULTON COUNTY JAIL

About the Fulton County Jail: In the criminal justice system, the county jail holds all pre-trial inmates with felony charges and many on state-level misdemeanor charges. The Fulton County Commission provides funding and other resources necessary for the Sheriff to operate the jail. Fulton County spends \$600 million on criminal justice, or a third of its budget.

Jail Statistics: Several handouts with Fulton County jail statistics were distributed around the room. In one sample week, the week of August 3-10, 2006:

- Jail is around 20 years old and has an official capacity of around 2000
- Daily intake ranged from 75 to 141, with an average of about 107
- Daily releases ranged from 29 to 161, with an average of 106 inmates release daily.
- Daily jail population ranged from 2,070 to 2,145, with an average daily population of 2,100 inmates
- An average of 175 inmates are shipped to the state department of corrections every month, for a total of 1,397 inmates. We are not clear if these are total prison sentences issued in Fulton County or if these are pre-trial inmates in need of special management.
- Residency (of 1,050 processed during sample week):
 - Inmates processed from outside of city of Atlanta: 202, or 19%
 - Inmates processed from other counties: 237, or 23%
 - Inmates processed from other states: 37, or 4%
 - Inmates processed with unknown address: 0, or 0%
 - Homeless inmates processed: 40, or 4%
 - Inmates processed with City of Atlanta address: 534, or 50%
- Atlanta Police brings in 63% of inmates during sample week.
- 53% of inmates were in jail on felony charges

Jail Crisis Nancy Boxill described Fulton County's situation as a "serious break-down in the criminal justice system. This, coupled with APD staffing shortages, puts us all at risk.

The federal government sets high standards for humane treatment of inmates. Jails must provide medical care and resources such as a library. Most critically, federal courts expect local jails to be run at or below capacity.

Fulton County is under a federal court order to alleviate serious overcrowding, and to release inmates in a timely manner. The Fulton County jail generally has 2-inmate cells, and often inmates are housed 3-4 to a cell (1-2 sleeping on the floor). Under the court order each inmate must have a bed. To date inmates often wait several days to be released after release order has been issued – Judge Shoob ordered the jail to be released within 48 hours after release order.

Municipality Issues: Fulton County has 12 municipalities, with 2 more coming into existence later this year. Each municipality is expected to have its own jail to house most state-level misdemeanors and local ordinance violators. Sandy Springs, incorporated last year, still has not built its own jail. Until they have their own jail, Fulton County will charge back a daily rate for each such inmate they bring to Fulton County. Because a significant part of the county has been incorporated into some municipality or another in the last year, changes in Fulton County's structure are taking place.

Each municipality is responsible for its *public safety* services, while the county is responsible for the criminal justice end (but only for state-level criminal offences). The county will continue to provide Libraries, Criminal Justice system, Public Health Department, and Tax collection.

Fulton County Government Plans: Fulton County will conduct a feasibility study on the expansion of its criminal justice system. A 5, 10 and 15 year study will include determining locations, construction and operation of additional jail space, retrofitting other facilities into jail space, and the court system.

Commissioner Boxill's recommendation to the neighborhood: conduct a panel discussion consisting of herself, Sheriff Myron Freeman, Fulton County District Attorney's office, and Atlanta Police. MPSA will look into conducting such a panel discussion.

HOMELESS ISSUE

- Commissioner Boxill feels there is more need for supportive housing units in Fulton County. Shelters need good programs to get people back on their feet.
- Mayor Shirley Franklin has gotten at least 5 metro communities to address their own homeless issues, according to Mrs. Boxill.
- Fulton County must provide treatment for substance abuse and mental health issues by way of its Health Department.
- Fulton County has a Street Team to deal with vagrants, particularly those that are mentally ill. .

Special task force: Commissioner Boxill wants to start a special task force, consisting of area churches and residents. She recently met with representatives of several churches and other organizations, including St. Mark and Crossroads Ministries. She asked us to appoint two people to represent the Midtown community – Nancy Reynolds, member of the MNA Board, and Elston Collins, a member of both the MPSA and MNA boards, will represent Midtown on this task force.

ATLANTA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Most APD issues were covered at the special safety meeting a week before. As with most safety meetings officer attrition is a significant issue – officers typically leave not necessarily because of pay, but also benefits, working conditions, and equipment.

Most interesting: Two police cars equipped with *license plate scanners* were loaned to APD. A camera scans license plates of surrounding cars and will detect stolen cars or expired or stolen tags. These devices scan cars up to 100 feet away, and have shown success in other places. Traditionally, the officer has to run each tag number into a computer or call it into a dispatch, taking several minutes just for one tag number. Chief Pennington intends to work a few of these cars into the APD budget. We found an interesting article about these devices at http://cbs13.com/local/local_story_356005132.html

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Two cars broken into on 4th Street had laptops in them – it is no wonder we continue to see car break-ins. It cannot be emphasized enough to not leave such valuables in vehicles!

MPSA PATROL ACTIVITY DURING JULY

MPSA Patrol officers assisted regular police operations with a vagrant detail. Vacant houses and lots were diligently checked for vagrants camping. This resulted in one arrest on a warrant.

<p>Arrest activity by MPSA Patrol during month of July</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 Drinking in public ▪ 1 Urinating in public ▪ 1 vice arrest ▪ 1 disorderly conduct ▪ 4 pedestrians in roadway ▪ 1 DUI 	<p>Traffic details during month of July:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 Violation of traffic control device ▪ 10 Stop sign violations ▪ 8 Speeding violations ▪ 1 seatbelt violation ▪ 1 with no insurance ▪ 2 expired tags ▪ 2 no driver license on person ▪ 1 suspended driver license <p>Of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 vehicle impounded ▪ 1 arrested
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MPSA MAILBAG

(This mail was read out at the August Safety meeting. Does not necessarily reflect MPSA view)

(8/14) After repeated complaints from us to Taco Bell management and main office about drug sales and prostitution off their property and out of their store location at Ponce and Parkway they now have off duty Atlanta Police Officers working there during the problem hours. The results have been dramatic. Not only have the police run the drug dealers off the Taco Bell property but have kept it down on the Ponce end of Parkway. It is now reasonably safe to go to the Taco Bell and the Kentucky Fried Chicken. Our buildings have been repeatedly tagged in recent months. If anyone sees anyone tagging please call 911. (This mail was read out at the August Safety meeting)

(8/09) After Monday's safety meeting [Special safety meeting on 7th], it became very clear to me that, like everywhere else, regardless of how much we pay in taxes, no one has the resources to put enough police where everybody has enough. I had to control myself from standing up and yelling, "Help is not on the way...save yourselves." Therefore, I would like to volunteer to see how I can help you make our neighborhood safer. I would like to get a full overview from you on where we stand now and what systems you would like to see implemented.

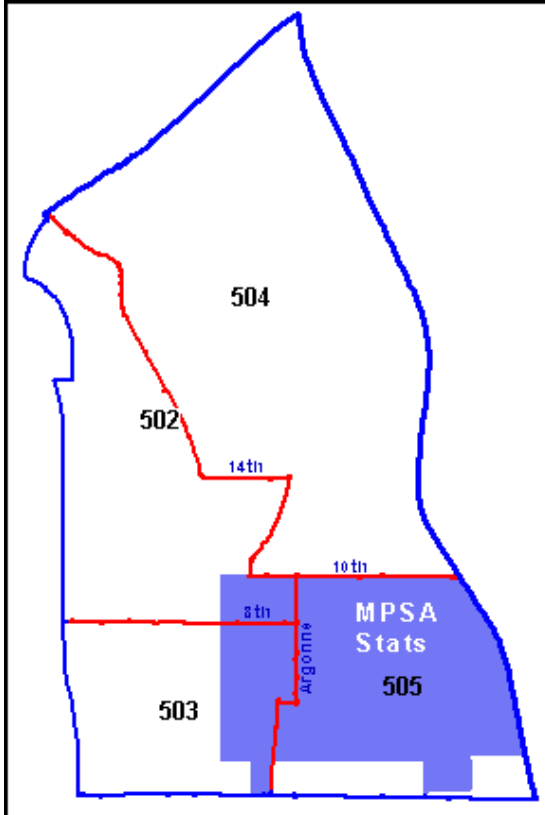
CONCLUSION

When reading our reports please remember that the MPSA focuses solely on safety and security issues. We will not sweep these serious issues under the carpet. We are proud to call this vibrant and diverse neighborhood home, with its wonderful amenities, historic character, interesting events, and most importantly its fantastic neighbors. This drives our dedication to a safer and more secure Midtown. Be sure to get out and enjoy the neighborhood, but be safe...

- YOUR NEIGHBORS AT THE MPSA

APPENDIX: CRIME STATS FOR JULY 2006

Statistics map showing the APD greater Midtown stats area (beats 502, 503, 504, 505) and the MPSA sub-area



APD STATS FOR Midtown Mini-Precinct

- 4 Beats covering the area bound by North Avenue, 75/85, future Beltline
- From handout at special safety meeting

Offence	2005	2006	Change
Homicide	1	0	-1
Rape	3	1	-2
Robbery	101	83	-18
A. Assault	63	57	-6
Burglary	100	95	-5
Larceny from Auto	849	960	+111
Larceny	359	281	-78
Auto Theft	243	236	-7
Total	1719	1713	-6

KEY INDICATORS FOR MPSA AREA

	ROBBERY				BURGLARY				CAR THEFT		
	2006	2005	2004		2006	2005	2004		2006	2005	2004
JAN	3	3	4	JAN	0	3	6	JAN	9	3	11
FEB	1	5	4	FEB	6	6	1	FEB	2	4	5
MAR	4	3	4	MAR	3	3	2	MAR	6	3	3
APR	11	4	7	APR	2	2	1	APR	7	5	4
MAY	5	5	6	MAY	1	5	1	MAY	6	12	4
JUN	7	8	7	JUN	7	2	9	JUN	14	4	7
JUL	6	4	7	JUL	9	1	6	JUL	16	10	15
AUG		5	2	AUG		4	11	AUG		6	9
SEP		4	3	SEP		10	6	SEP		3	6
OCT		2	10	OCT		4	10	OCT		3	6
NOV		5	5	NOV		3	10	NOV		5	3
DEC		8	1	DEC		11	6	DEC		2	10
TOTAL	37	56	60	TOTAL	28	54	69	TOTAL	60	60	83
→ YTD				→ YTD				→ YTD			
Month AVE →	5.28	4.66	5.00	Month AVE →	4.00	4.50	5.75	Month AVE →	8.57	5.00	6.91

Source: Atlanta Police website (crime mapping feature). This chart covers only MPSA service area, and only if the patrol could, at least theoretically, have some influence. This is not a performance review of the MPSA Patrol.