

MIDTOWN PUBLIC SAFETY MEETING REPORT

February 2006

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Peggy Denby, Safety Committee Co-Chair
- Lt. Bruce Hedley - Atlanta Police Midtown Mini-Precinct
- Sgt Barry Miller - MPSA Patrol Coordinator
- 17 additional Midtown residents

Peggy Denby opened the meeting with the announcement that co-chair Steve Gower has stepped down. He will be out of the country for several months and possibly permanently for career reasons. He has resigned from the MNA, and will be on inactive status with the MPSA Board until further notice. A number of items were discussed in the first part of the meeting:

Vandalism Spree

As reported last week, the three culprits are believed to have shot out 27 car windows with high-powered BB-guns. While we believe they shot out more windows, police have linked 27 counts to these individuals. As of this writing Giovanni Allen, Kermit Newman III, and Clemmie Skief II were still in jail, and one of them is wanted in East Point for an unrelated charge. Lt. Headley and others will monitor this and keep up informed.

Burglary on Glendale - There was a burglary in the 800 block of Glendale Terrace and the resident of the house told us by E-Mail the following:

I just wanted to pass along that our house was broken into today, Monday, February 13th. It happened around noon time while my wife and I were both at work. Police arrived on the scene after being notified by ADT. The first officer to arrive on the scene thought he may have heard someone inside, but no one was found or he managed to escape without being seen. So far it looks as though nothing is missing and the only damage was the back door that was broken after being forced open. I guess this is a random break in, but it hard to tell.

We would like to highlight the value of a good security system in your home, as there are street elements around at all times scouting for homes and cars to break into...

Prostitution - A neighbor near 5th & Piedmont wrote to us about finding more condoms than usual along the alleys, reflecting an increase in prostitution activity. While the patrol has pushed them to Peachtree and beyond, they are still coming over here to service johns. If you are aware of "servicing points" please let us know so we can have the patrol and APD watch those areas as best as possible.

Street lights - You can go to the Georgia Power website (www.georgiapower.com) to report street lights out. Click on "Report Lights Out"

Problem Property on Ponce next to the Abbey - As reported in previous safety reports and member updates, that vacant property attracts vagrants camping out. The building has been sold, and they expect to close in March. At some point it will be demolished and new condos will go up there.

Vacant Buildings on 7th Street - The two vacant apartment buildings on 7th Street between Juniper and Peachtree have become a very serious problem. Dangerous vagrants are camping and loitering there, and breaking into cars. It has become more uncomfortable to walk through that area on the way to Peachtree. Lt Headley talked about a new process to post "no trespassing" signs without requiring the owner's approval for each arrest. The Law Department of the City Government is reviewing the logistics to make sure this can be done with a simple sign. This will greatly enhance police ability to address problem properties like this.

MIDTOWN MANOR - The new managers of Midtown Manor attended the meeting and talked about what they have done to clean up the property. They stated that they will no longer allow prostitutes and drug dealers to live on the property. They are escorting people off their property when they become a problem.

COMMUNITY PROSECUTOR FOR THE FULTON DA'S OFFICE

Sharla Jackson, our community prosecutor at the Fulton County District Attorney's office, has established an Advisory Board for this area. Ms. Jackson's focus is the area comprising Atlanta Police Zone 5. Peggy Denby will participate as our representative in NPU-E. This advisory board will focus heavily on quality of life issues. They have already identified crack houses and problem businesses to target. Their first meeting was attended by Fulton DA Paul Howard, Major Hagin of APD, Kwanza Hall's assistant (Atlanta City Councilman for District 2), and other community and court representatives. The MPSA was mentioned several times about how neighborhood groups and police can work together to fight crime. The advisory board will meet quarterly.

Sharla Jackson also has a court watch program. The next Court Watch workshop will be Saturday, February 18, 2006, 9 - 1 Justice Center Tower. 185 Central Avenue, SW, Courtroom 1D, Bring your own lunch. Sharla Jackson 404 597 4728: Volunteers are always needed for this program.

MPSA PATROL REPORT - SGT. MILLER

Sgt Miller spoke briefly about MPSA Patrol activities. The new early morning MPSA shift has been added to address the transvestite prostitution activity in the morning hours. Officers have been looking for and tagging abandoned cars. Sgt. Miller tagged 5 cars last week, and all have been removed.

An attendee reported that he recently observed a street person trying various doors on Myrtle and 3rd. This is beyond suspicious, and should be reported to 911 immediately. Sgt Miller also reminded everyone to call anytime someone out of place is seen walking up and down the street. If they appear to not live in the neighborhood, they are likely casing houses or prowling. Even if the police have no charge on them, an officer can still conduct a field interview, which makes it clear that people in the neighborhood are watching.

MPSA VEHICLE UPDATE

More than \$11,000 has been raised. We are now renewing our fundraising activities after taking a break during the Holidays. Our immediate goal is to raise another \$7,000+ to purchase a new vehicle. Once the funding has been secured to purchase the vehicle we will then raise the funds to pay the operating expenses - we do not want to take any funding away from patrol hours to pay for the necessary gas, tires, oil and insurance.

Fundraising efforts will be directed towards residents and businesses in the MPSA area. Business sponsors will be acknowledged in all our member communications and on the vehicle itself.

The primary benefits of the vehicle to Midtown residents will be increased visibility and improved patrol officer recruitment and retention.

MIDTOWN TRAFFIC COMMITTEE

Sara Van Beck reported that a test case is being put together on Myrtle and 4th with the "traffic turtles". Traffic turtles are the white and yellow bowls on the pavement to narrow the street and keep vehicles from parking along that part of the curb. If it is successful in slowing down the traffic it may be expanded. Deedra Hemphill announced that she is meeting with Dogwood Festival organizers this week to address neighborhood traffic and safety concerns. Email Deedra (abbi1967@aol.com) directly if there are items that need to be added to the agenda.

The Midtown Traffic Committee has its own website at www.midtownatlantatraffic.org

ATLANTA POLICE

APD has once again moved staff around, and we welcome Lt. Headley as the new commander for the Midtown Mini-Precinct. He acknowledged that Boulevard has been a problem and announced that he is exploring new approaches to this problem area. Construction will start soon for the new Midtown Mini-Precinct in the Bellsouth building. Lt. Hedley will make use of the strike team concept, which is a street crimes unit established in Zone 5 about 2 years ago. It will be a 5-person team with a focus on auto break-ins and prostitution. The Zone 5 Strike Team made 60 cases last week.

He encouraged the neighborhood to send information as quickly as possible about what is going on in the neighborhood. The MPSA routinely forwards E-mails to Atlanta Police and other authorities relating to crime and quality of life issues - please tell us when you see or hear about suspicious activities.

Atlanta Police have devised new ways to track crime and have arrested a frequent burglar in the area. 33 year old Bruno Sterling was recently arrested for burglary, and in the process was also booked for possession of a pistol by a convicted felon. He remains in the Fulton County jail with a hold in Gwinnett County.