



MIDTOWN PONCE SECURITY ALLIANCE

Public Safety Report 02 / 2008

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THE FEBRUARY SAFETY MEETING

Attendance - Some 32 people attended the meeting moderated by Peggy Denby, among them:

- Lt. McGee and Lt. Hedley of Atlanta Police Department
- Lt. Foster & Lt. Holland of MARTA Police
- Sharla Jackson, Community Prosecutor for the Fulton County DA's Office
- Sgt. Cooper, MSPA Patrol Coordinator

Quick summary - Bedford Pine was our hot topic, and we had Lt. Hedley of the APD Red Dog unit on hand to talk about drug enforcement at street level. Bedford Pine is the single largest drain on street-level drug enforcement in the city. We passed out a handout on Bedford Pine, which also appear at the end of this report. The MPSA also rolled out **Eyes on Midtown** - a block watch program to enhance community participation and MPSA membership saturation.

BURGLARY ALERT!

In preparation for our monthly safety report we polled the crime stats at the APD website and found an alarming spike in burglaries. Normally we see about 3-4 burglaries a month, but this time we counted 20 incidents just for December and January.

Sgt. Cooper urges us to be more attentive to street people, and not to hesitate to report people out of the ordinary. Police would rather investigate and find nothing of concern, than take an incident report later.

On the one hand home security systems are indispensable, and reduce the likelihood that burglars will select your home. On the other hand burglars have a good sense of how long it will take before police actually arrive. It can take several minutes for an alarm call to be relayed to 911 via a monitoring center (not always local), and then dispatched to police units on the street.

CRIME STATS - for December 2007 & January 2008. These figures from the crime mapping feature at the Atlanta Police Dept. website are not official statistics but do give a good idea what is happening in our neighborhood.

Robberies (Date | Location | Crime Type | Report#)

- 12/03/2007 | **PENN AVE & 5TH ST** | ROB-STREET-STRONGARM | **073372341**
- 1/07/2008 | **CHARLES ALLEN DR & PONCE** | ROB-STREET-GUN | **080070763**
- 1/08/2008 | **486 PONCE DE LEON AVE** | ROB-BUSINESS-STRONGARM | **080080226**
- 1/20/2008 | **864 CHARLES ALLEN DR** | ROB-STREET-GUN | 080201037
- 1/20/2008 | **ARGONNE AVE && 7TH ST** | ROB-STREET-GUN | **080201160**
- 1/24/2008 | **748 MYRTLE ST** | ROB-STREET-GUN | **080240242**
- 1/24/2008 | **461 PONCE DE LEON AVE** | ROB-STREET-STRONGARM | **080241116**
- 1/30/2008 | **746 MONROE DR** | ROB-RESIDENCE-KNIFE | **080301457**

Burglaries (Date | Location | Crime Type | Report#)

- 12/05/2007 | **687 KENNESAW AVE** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RES. | **073390962**
- 12/07/2007 | **840 MONROE CIR** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **073411158**
- 12/10/2007 | **229 PONCE** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **073441912**
- 12/13/2007 | **799 CHAS ALLEN DR** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RES. | **073471237**
- 12/15/2007 | **290 8TH ST** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **073491601**
- 12/25/2007 | **734 CHAS ALLEN DR** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RES. | **073590967**
- 12/26/2007 | **742 MONROE DR** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **073600876**
- 12/27/2007 | **787 PENN AVE** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **073610872**
- 12/28/2007 | **743 PENN AVE** | ATTEMPT BURG-FORCED ENTRY-RES | **073620817**
- 12/28/2007 | **791 PENN AVE** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **073620012**
- 1/01/2008 | **360 PONCE** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **080011260**
- 1/03/2008 | **691 PENN AVE** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **080030071**
- 1/03/2008 | **693 MYRTLE ST** | BURG-NO FORCD ENTRY-RESID | **080031948**
- 1/04/2008 | **742 MONROE DR** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **080041241**
- 1/04/2008 | **799 PIEDMONT AVE** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **080041910**
- 1/05/2008 | **164 4TH ST** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **080051628**
- 1/06/2008 | **886 VEDADO WAY** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **080061383**
- 1/08/2008 | **929 MYRTLE ST** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **080080809**
- 1/16/2008 | **717 PIEDMONT AVE** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **080161762**
- 1/22/2008 | **265 PONCE** | BURGLARY-FORCED ENTRY-RESIDENC | **080221285**

Auto Theft (Date | Location | Crime Type | Report#)

- 12/11/2007 | **929 CHARLES ALLEN DR** | AUTOTHEFT | **073451086**
- 12/15/2007 | **405 10TH ST** | AUTOTHEFT | 073490473
- 1/02/2008 | **CHARLES ALLEN DR && 10TH ST** | AUTOTHEFT | **080021885**
- 1/27/2008 | **910 TAFT AVE** | AUTOTHEFT | **080270787**

UPDATE FROM LOCAL POLICE AGENCIES

RED DOG unit - Lt. Hedley came to the February 2008 safety meeting to speak about drug enforcement in Atlanta. The discussion on street level drug enforcement goes hand-in-hand with the core of the Bedford Pine issue. Hedley supervises the Red Dog unit (which stands for *Run Every Drug Dealer Out of Georgia*) of the Atlanta Police Department and they spend much time dealing with Bedford Pine issues.

As Lt. Hedley explained it, there are three levels of drug enforcement in Atlanta

- The **Red Dog** unit aggressively pursues street-level drug dealers

- The ***Narcotics Division*** pursues mid-level dealers
- **HIDTA** (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) is a federal agency that coordinates multi-agency efforts (federal, state, and local) aimed at major drug dealers

Red Dog operates city-wide, with 4-5 teams and regularly monitors 30 specific hotspots around the city. Bedford Pine is a major hotspot for them, and they sweep this area almost every day. Every night they pursue street-level drug dealers like most of the ones in Bedford Pine. This operation also sets the stage for the Narcotics Division - once they are back in full force - to take down mid-level dealers.

Red Dog operates a **tip line** at **404-853-3444**, and callers can remain anonymous. 60% of the tips coming into this line lead to an arrest. An informant needs to give as much detail as possible when relaying tips to the Atlanta Police. They need a very good description of clothing, age and size of the individual, and especially where they are hiding the drugs. APD needs to observe this individual, and need to determine whether the drugs are kept on the subject's person or if they are stashing the drugs somewhere nearby.

Several people have asked us if we knew anything about the low-flying helicopter chasing a car last week on North Avenue near the Varsity. Lt. Hedley told us that it was Red Dog unit pursuing a drug dealer. According to the APD website, *the Helicopter Unit is used to assist the patrol units in a variety of functions, including but not limited to: support for vehicle and foot chases, stolen vehicle recovery, and managing traffic flow.*

Midtown Mini-precinct - According to Lt. McGee, the Midtown mini-precinct handled 777 calls for service, made 94 arrests, impounded 16 vehicles, and issued 39 traffic citations during the period between Midtown safety meetings. Vice units will continue their periodic stings in the area. 8 prostitutes were rounded up and taken to jail during the last sting.

Officer Mason, who took down the two shooters in the recent Bedford Pine incident, was commended by the Atlanta Police for her handling of a very dangerous situation. Officer Mason works out of the Midtown Mini-precinct during the day, and patrols the streets of Midtown for MPSA a couple times per week.

The Midtown Mini-precinct is a detachment of Atlanta Police Zone 5, and works out of Atlantic Station. It covers not only Midtown, but also Ansley Park, Home Park, and Atlantic Station.

MARTA Police - Lt. Foster and Lt. Holland of MARTA Police announced that the next citizen's police academy will start on March 18th. An application and more details can be found at www.itsmarta.com.

The trains have emergency intercoms in each car. By pushing the red button contact is established with the operator of the train. Each station has several police phones where you can report problems to MARTA Police.

GIVING GOOD VICTIM/WITNESS STATEMENTS

The police always have trouble with victims not getting a good look at suspects. Situations can happen very fast and dramatically, and it is easy to forget to note critical descriptors. The police have a system for identifying vehicles based on partial tag numbers.

In addition to the usual descriptors - height, age, build, etc - try to note shoes! Culprits often discard or change items like hats or clothing, but rarely change their shoes while fleeing a crime scene.

It is especially important to keep your phone line open once you have made a 911 call, at least until either police arrive or call back. When calling 911 remain calm, identify yourself and what you are calling about. The 911 operator will need the nearest street address to the situation at hand. Be sure to wait for additional questions by the operator before hanging up.

Gun descriptions -Sgt. Cooper explained the difference between pistols and semi-automatics. A revolver has multiple chambers for single bullets, whereas a semi-automatic operates with a cartridge of bullets loaded all at once. Anonymous contributors to Wikipedia give good descriptions of revolvers and semi-automatics.

A revolver is a repeating firearm that consists of multiple chambers and at least one barrel for firing. As the user cocks the hammer, the cylinder revolves to align the next round with the barrel, which gives its name. In modern sense, a revolver refers to a handgun that has a revolving cylinder which typically chambers 5 or 6 rounds. However, other firearms and weapons may also have the design of a revolver, with notable examples being various grenade launchers and riot guns, and even some rifles.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolver>)

A semi-automatic pistol is a type of handgun that can be fired in semi-automatic mode, firing one cartridge for each pull of the trigger. This type of firearm uses a single chamber and a single barrel, which remain in a fixed linear orientation relative to each other while being fired and reloaded semi-automatically. Some terms that have been, or still are, used as synonyms for semi-automatic pistol are automatic pistol, autopistol, self-loading pistol, and self-loader.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi-automatic_handgun)

For more detailed information on both revolver and semi-automatic mechanisms the California Department of Justice has a study guide on handgun safety. This document includes pictures of both, with explanations of all the parts.
<http://ag.ca.gov/firearms/forms/pdf/hscsg.pdf>

BLOCK WATCH IN EFFECT

We have launched *Eyes on Midtown* - our block watch program - and we now need volunteers for street captains! *Eyes on Midtown* provides another mechanism to the Midtown community to proactively participate in a safer neighborhood. This neighbor-to-neighbor approach to Midtown safety does three things:

- Enhances cohesion among neighbors by getting to know each other better and becoming more involved with the civic life of our neighborhood
- Enhances our ability to formulate and implement effective responses to public security issues,
- Most importantly generates support for the MPSA Patrol - the very core of our efforts toward a safer neighborhood. By increasing MPSA membership saturation we can add more patrol hours.

We have designated block units clustered into color-coded zones. So far several volunteers for block captain, and we need more. In each block unit a captain coordinates simple communication among residents, promotes block watch practices, and alerts residents to special situations. Down the road the block watch program will also provide another mechanism for social events - like block parties and flashlight walks. The block captains will also help us build our membership base in order to fund a more effective patrol in our neighborhood. As we build this program we will provide necessary materials and orientation meetings.

All of the information - basic objectives, block group configurations, and other information - can be found at our website (recently revised with a fresh look at everything the MPSA does for you) under block watch.

- www.midtownponce.org

BEDFORD PINE

The issue - 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 drives much of the crime and public order problems in our neighborhood.

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.

General Geographic Description - A large *project-based* Section 8 project dominates the Parkway/Boulevard corridor. Revitalization is well underway in the immediately surrounding area. Many homes have been restored beautifully both in Midtown to the north and in Old Fourth Ward to the east. But the area is interspersed with a few problem properties and problem businesses (though some have closed in recent years).

Geographic relationship to the MPSA service area - This drug market is most concentrated along Boulevard and Parkway Drive from Ponce de Leon Avenue to about Atlanta Medical Center.

- When walking south on Monroe Drive it becomes Boulevard upon crossing Ponce de Leon Avenue.
- When walking south on Charles Allen Drive it becomes Parkway Drive upon also upon crossing Ponce de Leon Avenue.

The MPSA service area extends south to include all properties with a curb on Ponce (both north and south curbs), but no further south except for Myrtle Street, Kennesaw Avenue, and Glen Iris Drive - and then only to North Avenue. The remaining areas between Ponce and North Avenue are too out-of-control for the MPSA Patrol to handle effectively.

Conditions in the Bedford Pine area - Street drug dealing runs rampant in this area. Drug dealers recruit area children as lookouts and for other logistical roles - hence the children running up to cars. In the BP properties many of the tenants bring in unauthorized residents (boyfriends, etc) who are often drug dealers. Unofficial police sources tell us that when suspects are arrested they will often claim addresses elsewhere to avoid the eviction of girlfriends, etc. Drug dealers and other unauthorized persons have keys to BP-owned buildings. Lookouts have been observed working from balconies.

Residents in this area live in fear of retaliation or harm to their children. Most residents will not cooperate with security efforts and will not let police into the building when responding to calls or come looking for someone. In the past we have heard stories about people finding notes threatening to burn down homes if they talk to police. This is common in areas where drug dealing is out of control.

Impact on Midtown - Brings a high volume of drug traffic to the area - it is said that 25% or more of the street drugs in Atlanta pass through the Boulevard/ Parkway Drive area. This drug market poses a significant factor behind the street prostitution, car break-ins, street robberies, and home burglaries within the MPSA service area. This drug market also compounds the extreme levels of vagrant activity afflicting Midtown and the surrounding area.

Bedford Pine Apartments - These federally-subsidized apartments are owned by Continental Wingate (based in Needham, MA) and managed through its subsidiary Wingate Management. These buildings appear in the Fulton County property register as one of the six phases of Bedford Pine - First Bedford Pine Apartments, Second Bedford Pine, etc. In total there are 73 buildings and 732 units. According to the property manager around 2000 people live there. Bear in mind that these are only people "officially" on their records - additional unauthorized people are not counted.

Daily Report article in October 2007

- Title of article: *Low-income property owner spurns new development*
- Fabric Developers and Russell New Urban Developments have expressed interest in redeveloping this area
- Continental Wingate, who purchased the properties in 1979, does not want to pursue this
- According to Russell, tenants would receive notice of at least one year about a change in status, and then HUD would issue vouchers enabling tenants to relocate to another place accepting Section 8 vouchers
- Kwanza Hall was quoted as saying that security cameras were planned for this area, including at Ponce & Boulevard and Parkway Drive & North Avenue

Basics of Section 8 housing - Section 8 housing is that which is privately owned but subsidized by the federal government via HUD. The owner of a Section 8 property has a contract with the Federal government establishing a per-unit rate based on metropolitan area real estate statistics. A tenant pays a portion of the contract rate for his apartment, and the Federal government pays the remainder of the rent.

A project-based Section 8 housing complex is one in which the entire complex is meant for Section 8 subsidies. In a project-based complex there are no non-subsidized units.

This contrasts from regular Section 8 status meaning that the property is normally market-rate but the owner accepts Section 8 vouchers. Section 8 housing can be lucrative because HUD guarantees an uninterrupted cash flow for the subsidized portion. If a landlord plays his cards right, he can make more by taking in Section 8 tenants than taking in market-rate tenants.

But not all of the problems associated with Section 8 can be attributed to the landlord. Unlike publicly-owned subsidized housing a Section 8 landlord cannot impose a minimum payment on the part of the tenant - the Federal Government allows a landlord to take in zero-rent tenants.

The problem for us has much more to do with an inordinate concentration of poverty than with subsidized housing per se. The AHA property at 10th & Juniper has been around for many years, and for many years another subsidized property has existed alongside Ansley Park - at the corner of Piedmont Avenue and Westminster Drive. We never hear about or see problems for the surrounding neighborhoods coming from these two properties.

What the MPSA would like to see - 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 early 1990's Techwood Homes 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. Most importantly, redevelopment would greatly improve the quality of living in surrounding neighborhoods. An inordinate concentration of poverty coupled with social instability adversely affects all in the community.

In short, we would like to see an end to our federal tax dollars supporting this serious impediment to community safety and security.

STAY SAFE! Please encourage your fellow Midtowners to join the MPSA!

- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance