

Herman Goldstein Award – Project Submission

Cincinnati Police Department Problem Solving Project – iStorage

Summary:

Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) District Three experienced an uptick in burglary offenses and was responsible for 40% of department wide burglaries for the time period January to April 2023.

District Three had 241 burglary offenses, 217 of these offenses were break ins at the iStorage property, 2201 Moellring Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The goal of the project was to reduce break ins at the property, thereby reducing financial loss for the victims, business owners and reduce the burden on law enforcement.

The assessment phase of the project found a 76.67% decrease in offenses at 2201 Moellring Ave between the first and last 6-month periods in 2023. A 24.29% decrease in Burglary/BE offenses in District Three between the first and last 6-month periods in 2023.

Description:

Scan:

In January of 2023 the District Three Investigative unit noticed an extreme increase in burglary offenses from the iStorage, a commercial property, located at 2201 Moellring Ave. These offenses directly affected the renters of the storage units, the owners of the property and the neighboring homes. This increase in crime created a financial drain to the renters of the storage units as well as an increased burden on CPD. The reports indicated that storage units were being broken into several times per week.

Analysis:

The data analysis started in January and ran through April of 2023. This location had a total of 18 calls for service during the prior six-month time frame. The incidents spiked in January resulting in 62 calls for police service over the next four months. 68 victims eventually made contact with law enforcement. In the same time frame District 3 recorded 241 total break in offences where 217 stemmed from this location alone. Multiple offenses were often reported together, and many victims never reported the crimes. The lack of security and general condition of the property created an environment that was favorable for crime. A CPTED, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, inspection was conducted, and areas of needed improvement were noted.

This self-storage facility is located at the end of a dead-end street on a steep hillside. There is no other infrastructure or roadway that runs above this location. Directly to the west is a vacant wooded lot.

The downhill side of the area is to the north where there are three residences, however the slope of the terrain is such that there is no view of the iStorage from the residences.

To the east of the property is another wooded lot that is owned by and backs up to a commercial scrap metal recycling facility.

Problems found with the iStorage and surrounding areas:

- The front/ main entry gate was using the same pass code combinations for extended periods of time.
- The back vehicle gate was not monitored at all.
- Perimeter fencing was not secure, missing, or cut open in multiple areas.
- The security camera system only had two, antiquated, working cameras, both of which were at the main office and were of so poor quality that the suspects were unable to be identified.
- Area lighting was insufficient and led to numerous areas where dark corners and shadows would accommodate the movement of criminals.
- The layout of the grounds consisted of 8 large buildings all containing central hallways with storage units on both sides of the hall. The doorways to these buildings were not secure.
- The facility had a single on-site employee during the evening hours and several days per week no one was working at all.
- A city owned property directly adjacent to the iStorage was heavily wooded and allowed for the homeless to create an encampment that was completely hidden from view.

Interviews were conducted with onsite employees and with local and regional store managers for iStorage. Employees described the situation clearly and openly citing the same concerns for the safety of renters, themselves, and the property. Several meetings were held at District 3 where Nick Edwards, the regional manager, worked with Investigative Sergeants and Detectives, the Neighborhood Liaison Unit Sergeant and Officers, District Commanders, and Attorneys from the City Solicitors Office. These meetings created a controlled environment for collaboration between Law Enforcement and iStorage to determine the goals and objectives and develop a strategy for an effective response.

Response:

Goals:

- Increase safety for renters and employees.
- Reduce financial loss for the victims and for iStorage.
- Reduce the burden on Law Enforcement.

Data was used to determine the days of the week and time frame that was most likely for the crimes to occur.

A traditional law enforcement response to identify and arrest the suspects was only part of the proposed solution. At the time of this problem-solving initiative, we did not know how many people were involved. Was it one or two individuals? Or ten? Was it metal scrappers? or Heroin users? Were certain units or items being targeted or was it simply a crime of opportunity? What was happening with the property once it was taken?

CPD implemented Directed patrols by on duty beat officers to increase police visibility. Police Remote HD cameras were installed inside several building hallways as well as at several perimeter locations to record offenses and identify suspects. Plain clothes units and afterhours details were tasked with surveilling the area.

City Building and Zoning, Health Department, Private Lot Abatement, and Greater Cincinnati Behavioral (Path) were advised of the project. These resources provided services to anyone utilizing the surrounding encampments and assisted them in relocating to a stable living situation. The homeless encampment was cleared.

iStorage was asked to install sufficient lighting around the property, completely update the security camera system, install locks on the storage unit doors, create a more reliable method of updating the main gate passcode that would keep non-current renters from entering the property, and fix the perimeter fencing.

Engagement by iStorage was slow due to the high cost of implementing reasonable and effective change in a short period of time. The regional manager was not able to make financial decisions at this level without the approval of corporate authority.

The city solicitor's office worked on creating a nuisance property case to lend some legal and potentially criminal support to further enforce the changes being proposed in case of a breakdown of cooperation with iStorage corporate.

Detectives and patrol officers were soon able to develop leads based on CPD remote camera pictures as well as other local area arrests and interviews that lead to suspects being identified.

Two nearby stash houses were identified and secured. The houses were used to store the stolen property until it could be sold.

Suspects were identified and arrested for crimes committed on the iStorage property and crimes in the surrounding areas related to the illegal activity on the property. All suspects involved were known heroin users.

Assessment:

The response goals and objectives were achieved. The iStorage management completed all the required improvements and updates to their property. In addition, the project resulted in an effective clean-up of the surrounding areas. The homeless encampment was abated, and social services were rendered to those disadvantaged subjects discovered during the analysis and response stages. The two stash houses were boarded up and are now managed by the Cincinnati Port Authority.

As a result of the project there was a 24.29% decrease in Burglary/BE offenses in District Three between the first and last 6-month periods, 2023. There was a 76.67% decrease in offenses at 2201 Moellring Ave between the first and last 6-month periods, 2023.

As a follow up to the project the District Three Neighborhood Liaison Unit meets monthly with the iStorage management to ensure compliance and continues to monitor the iStorage property and surrounding areas for any increase in activity.

Submitting Agency: Cincinnati Police Department, Cincinnati Ohio

Police Chief Teresa A. Theetge

**Project Lead: District Three Neighborhood Liaison Unit – Sergeant Jacob Hicks,
Captain David Johnston, District Three Commander**

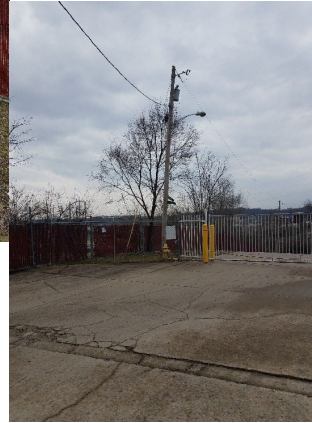
Submitted by: Captain Amanda Caton – Collaborative Policing Section

APPENDICES:

iStorage, 2201 Moellering Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio

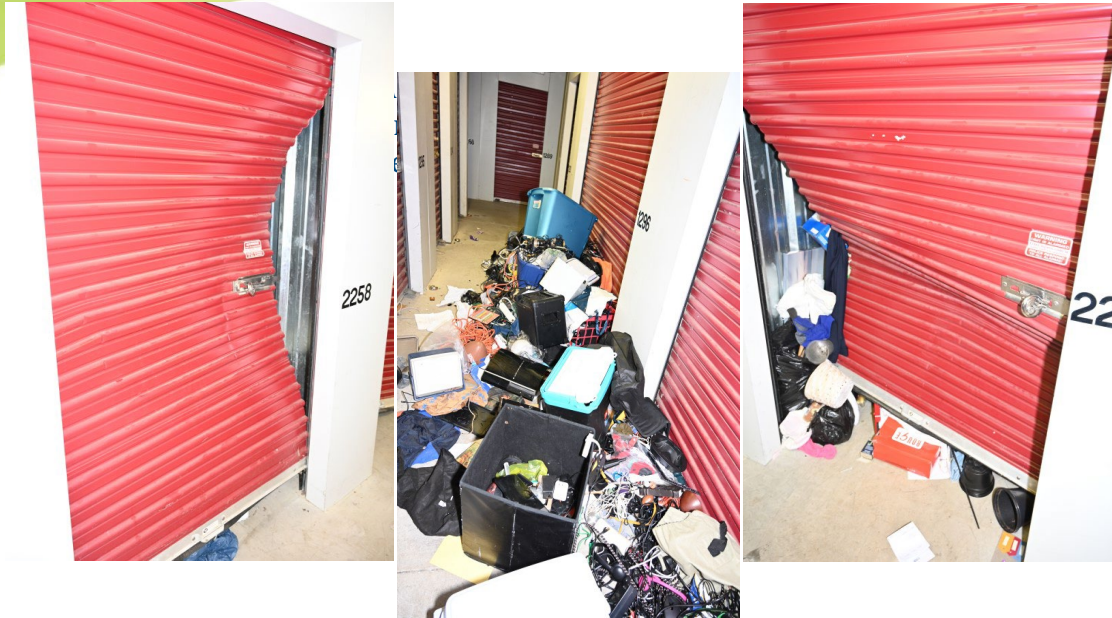
CPTED

Compromised Perimeter Security Fencing



CPTED

Unit door security is easily defeated



CPTED

Homeless Encampment on City Owned Property



PORTABLE SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS



Remote viewing of video and still imagery



INFERIOR UNIT DOORS



STASH HOUSES

Two houses on Winfield Avenue were identified and secured.



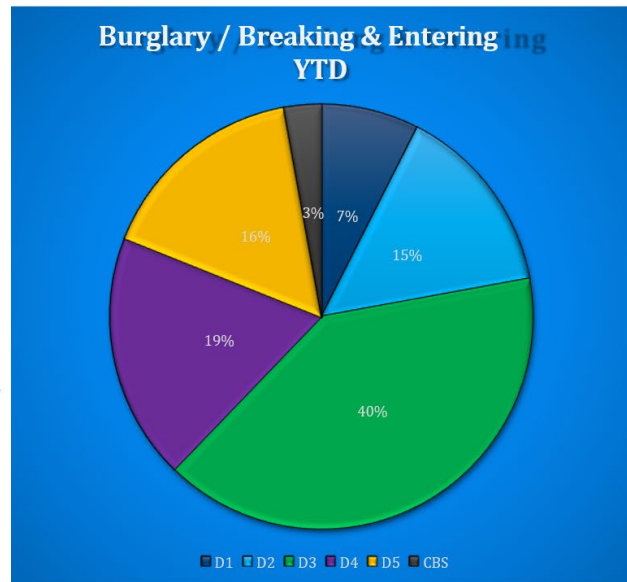
AERIAL VIEW WITH PROPERTY OUTLINES



CITY WIDE BURGLARY YTD

Excessive Reported Crime at location Since January 2023

- City wide burglary
 - 601
- Total break ins
 - 241 for District Three
 - 217 at this property
- Total victims contacted
 - 68
- Total calls for service
 - 63



PROJECT PARTNERS



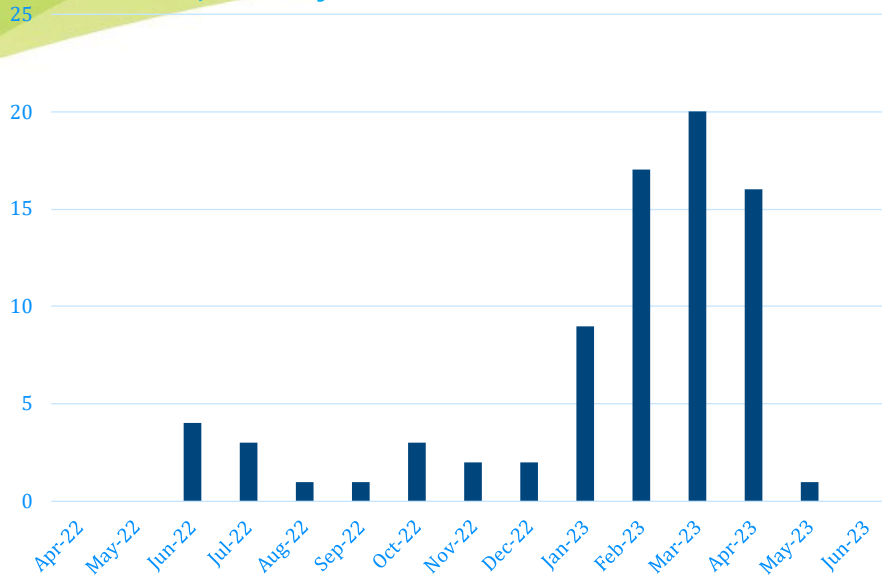
- Law Department
- Building and Zoning
- PLAP (Private Lot Abatement Program)
- City Planning Department
- Health Department
- Police Department

ADDITIONAL PARTNERS

- Greater Cincinnati Behavioral (PATH Program)
- Local Neighbors

12 MONTH CALL FOR SERVICE

63 Runs since January 2023



SECURITY

“Our facility has a number of great features such as:”

As Advertised

- 24 hour video recording on the premises
- Electronic gate access
- Fully fenced facility
- Locks available for purchase
- Well-lit facility
- Month-to-month leases
- No deposit required

Reality

- 2 inoperable video cameras on property
- Electronic gate with 4-digit access code that can be hacked
- Low fence with holes
- No building door locks
- Little to no security lighting

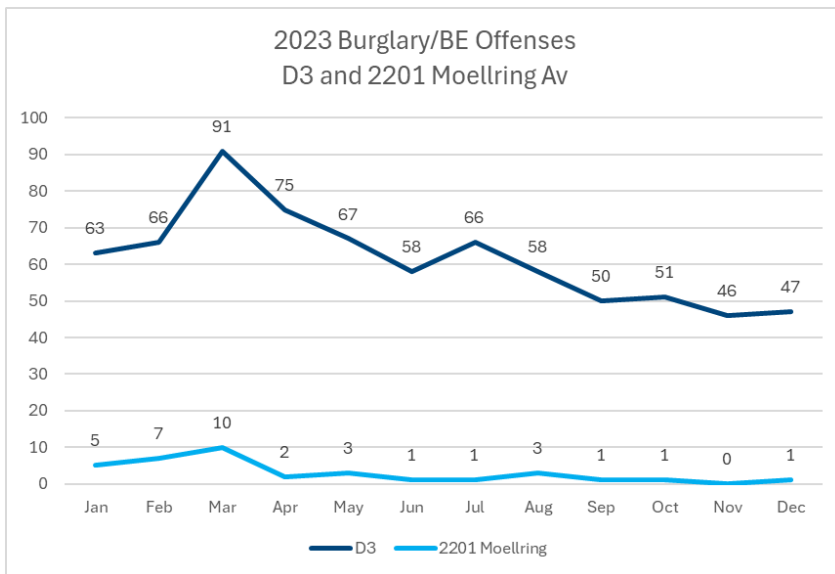
APPENDICES:

iStorage, 2201 Moellring Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio

Assessment:

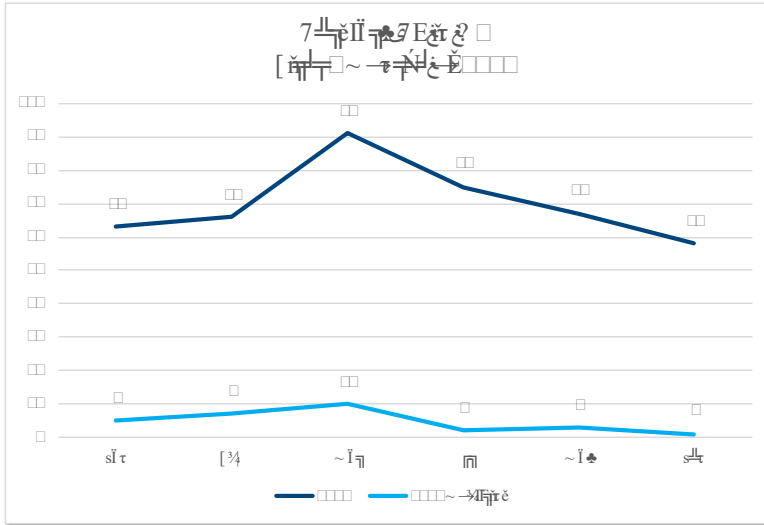
Basic Stats

- There were 738 Burglary/BE offenses in District 3 in 2023
 - 420 in the first 6 months (Jan-Jun)
 - 318 in the last 6 months (Jul-Dec)
 - There was a 24.29% decrease in Burglary/BE offenses in D3 between the first and last 6-month periods.
- There were 37 offenses committed at 2201 Moellring Ave in 2023
 - 30 in the first 6 months (Jan-Jun)
 - 28 were Burglary/BE offenses (93.33%)
 - 2 were Personal/Other Theft (6.67%)
 - 7 in the last 6 months (Jul-Dec)
 - 7 were Burglary/BE offenses (100%)
 - There was a 76.67% decrease in offenses at 2201 Moellring Ave between the first and last 6-month periods.



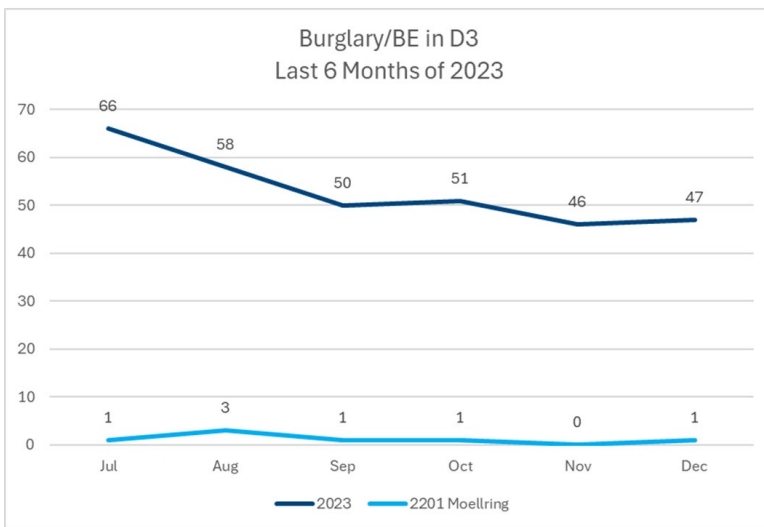
- D3 saw a 24.3% decrease in Burglary/BE offenses between the first and last 6 months of the year.
- 2201 Moellring Ave saw a 75.0% decrease in Burglary/BE offenses between the first and last 6 months of the year.

First 6 months of 2023 (Jan-Jun)



- In the first six months of 2023 (Jan-Jun), D3 averaged 70 Burglary/BE offenses per month.
- On average, 6.7% of these offenses occurred at 2201 Mollering Av.
- With Mollering averaging 4.67 offenses per month during this time.

Last 6 months of 2023 (Jul-Dec)



- In the last six months of 2023 (Jul-Dec), D3 averaged 53 Burglary/BE offenses per month.
- On average, 2.2% of these offenses occurred at 2201 Mollering Av.
- With Mollering averaging 1.17 offenses per month during this time.