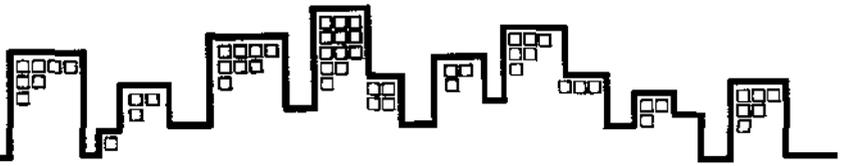


# Keys to the City



Problem Solving in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department

FEBRUARY, 1993

VOLUME 2, No.1

## **Disturbances, Intimidation, Elder Abuse**

Sixth District Officer Steve Lewis noticed an alarming increase in radio calls to the senior citizen home at 5310 N. Euclid. In fact, in 1992 this location was the fifth highest call location in the district with 163 calls. [In the past three months another 32 calls have originated from this address.]

Most of the calls involve disturbances, cuttings, shootings, drug dealing, and fights. By analyzing the calls, Steve could easily see that the senior citizens were the clear victims in most of the incidents.

Looking into the problem further, Steve discovered that 80% of the residents were senior citizens and 20% were either mentally ill or substance abusers.

By federal law, housing authorities were not permitted to house substance abusers, the mentally ill, and the elderly in separate facilities. Failing to understand the logic behind such a law, Steve contacted United States Senator Kit Bond's office and asked for help.

In the meantime, Steve met with the managers of the building and the Chief of St. Louis Housing Authority, Al Wilson, to try to control some

of the recurring problems that led to calls for the police.

Steve noticed that people were free to come and go from any of the building's several doorways, a practice that resulted in poor building security. In addition, senior citizens were often placed in apartments next door to a substance abuser, the very people who abused them.

Steve's first step was to tighten building security. All doors, except the front entrance, were alarmed and made fire exits only. All visitors were made to enter the building through the front door and register with the security officer. This also made it more difficult for residents to bring in unauthorized guests who frequently caused trouble.

The manager also gave the police an office in the building that they could use to write reports.

Next, steps were taken to segregate the senior residents from the others. The managers hoped to develop a floor plan that would accomplish this.

Meanwhile, Steve kept in contact with Senator Bond's office. Steve expressed his support for an amendment to the federal housing laws, which was drafted and submitted to Congress. The new law would

allow housing authorities to put senior citizens in homes separate from the young disabled.

The bill was passed by Congress in October and signed into law by the President of the United States. Senator Bond wrote Steve a nice letter of appreciation for his professional advice.

**Kit Bond**  
February 14, 1993

Mr. Steve Lewis  
St. Louis Police Department  
5310 N. Euclid  
St. Louis, Missouri 63112

Dear Mr. Lewis:

Thank you for contacting my office in reference to the problem of unauthorized persons entering the building at 5310 N. Euclid. I have reviewed your concerns in this area and am pleased to hear that you have taken steps to address the problem. I will continue to support your efforts and will be glad to provide any assistance that I can.

Sincerely,  
**Kit Bond**  
United States Senator

## **Panhandling, Littering, Intimidation**

**In August, 1992 Captain** Pollihan of the Fourth District received a call from the E.Z. Diner, a local downtown business located at 917 N. 1st.

The owner was complaining about transients approaching his patrons, begging for money. Sometimes the panhandling was so aggressive it bordered on robbery. The transients roamed the area in search of food and other necessities. After rummaging  
see PANHANDLING, p.2

**PANHANDLING, from p.1** through the trash dumpsters, they often left the alleys and street littered with garbage.

The panhandling, combined with the declining appearance of the area, sent the message that the neighborhood was unsafe and invited even larger problems. Fearing a decrease in his business, the merchant asked that something be done. Officers Rock Nilhas and Dan Crowe were asked to address the problem.

Located next to the restaurant were two railway boxcars. The cars were without their wheels and were sitting on old railway spurs (tracks). The grass surrounding the cars was covered with broken bottles and trash.

Rock and Dan discovered eighteen to twenty people living inside. Rock described the area as filthy and unsanitary. He said it looked as though they had been living there for years. The transients created unsanitary conditions that posed a health risk to themselves and others in the area.

The first step Rock and Dan took was to find out who owned the train cars and the rails on which they were parked. The cars were stenciled with the lettering "MO-PAC." Dan called the Dupo, Illinois office of the Missouri-Pacific Railroad Company and spoke with **Mr. Mark Stephenson**, a representative of the company.

Mr. Stephenson acknowledged that MO-PAC owned the cars and agreed to

look into the problem. Several days passed and the officers had not heard anything. They recontacted Mr. Stephenson and this time insisted that he respond to the location. After inspecting the area, Mr. Stephenson agreed to remove the cars.

In the meantime, Mr. Stephenson said he would arrange to have the doors of the cars welded shut within two weeks.

Dan informed the transients of the plans to secure the rail cars. He also told them that arrangements had been made with the Salvation Army and the Peter & Paul Church for temporary shelter and long term placement. By the end of August the transients had moved and the rail cars were welded shut.

The next objective was to have the cars dismantled and removed from the area. However, by the end of September the rail cars had been broken into and the transients had returned.

Not satisfied with the progress being made by Mr. Stephenson in removing the cars, Rock called the district representative of MO-PAC, **Mr. Rich Schreiber** and voiced his concerns. Mr. Schreiber promised to have the cars removed. Six weeks later a wrecking crew had dismantled the cars, removed the debris, and cleaned up the area.

Since that time Rock and Dan have noticed a significant improvement in the area. Some of the transients who lived in the train are now living at the

Salvation Army.

## **Drug House, Public Drinking, Derelict Autos, Vacant Lots, Vacant Buildings**

This past August **lieutenant Joseph Richardson**, Commander of the **Mobile Reserve/ Canine Division**, was contacted by **Ms. Gina Ryan**, Director of the **St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (S.L.A.C.O.)**. Ms. Ryan, appearing on behalf of the **Buder Park Neighborhood (The Gate District)**, was familiar with the idea of community problem solving and asked Lieutenant Richardson if it could be applied in Buder Park. Lieutenant Richardson assigned **Officers Simon Risk, Robert Laschober, and Gary Hill** to look into the problems of the neighborhood.

To understand the concerns and fears of this community, the officers talked with **Ms. Katrina Canterbury**, block captain for the Buder Park neighborhood, and asked her to arrange a neighborhood meeting. At this meeting the officers hoped to get information and commitment to help from residents.

Through conversation and observations the officers made a list of concerns. Several drug houses, street prostitution, drinking on the street, vacant buildings, derelict autos, unkept vacant lots, and trash in alley ways topped the list.

To better organize their

efforts, Simon divided the list into two parts. The problems of vacant buildings, derelict autos, unkept lots, and trash in the alleys, would be the residents\* responsibility. The drug houses, street prostitution, and drinking on the street would be handled by the officers.

Simon felt that this approach would show the residents that they could restore order to their neighborhood and it kept them involved with their neighborhood and city government. They were given phone numbers, ideas, and names of people to contact. Dividing responsibility also created more time for the officers to work on other problems.

The officers began their work at 3221 Lafayette, a drug house identified by the residents. The six owner-occupants convert this two family flat into a single family home. The officers began strictly enforcing laws and ordinances in the area.

The officers went to the house to interview the occupants. They saw exposed electrical wiring, human feces on the floor, and holes in several of the walls. Mr. Paul Sims, City Building Inspector, was called to inspect the house, and he quickly condemned the building because of these violations.

The owners appealed, claiming they would repair the property. At the Housing Court hearing, twenty-five neighborhood residents showed up to testify against the owners.

When the property owner saw the opposition, he left the court without testifying. The trial officer denied the appeal and acknowledged the efforts of the residents and the police officers.

The evening after the hearing, the officers returned to Lafayette to make sure the occupants had left the building. Because one of the violations was for electrical service, the officers contacted Mr. Ben Jones of Union Electric Security. Mr. Jones arranged to have the electricity disconnected and the meter removed.

The officers next focused on prostitution in the area of Park and Theresa. They identified three prostitutes working the area regularly. Simon and Bob warned the women of their intentions to arrest them if they continued their illegal activity. The warning seems to have had an effect; the prostitutes have not been seen in the area since.

Next on the list was the problem of drug trafficking in the Caroline, Rutger Square, and Hickory Square Apartments. After speaking with the managers, the officers set a meeting with the residents of the apartment complexes.

The officers realized that some of the residents might be afraid to openly voice their concerns, so they distributed a confidential questionnaire with a self addressed stamped envelope at the meeting.

One hundred and twenty-five people attended the meeting. The officers were told of six drug houses in the complex.

People wanted these problems addressed first because they were afraid of the violence associated with drug dealing.

The managers made keys available to the officers so they could use vacant apartments as surveillance locations. Leases in the Caroline and Rutger Square Apartments include a drug clause amendment.

The drug clause amendment allows the managers to evict any tenant arrested for drug charges in or near their apartment. After several criminal drug cases were made on the occupants of the six suspected apartments, including one for "drug trafficking," the officers encouraged the managers to begin the eviction process. Hesitant at first, the managers did so. One tenant's appeal to the Housing Court was denied and the drug clause ruled valid.

This same technique was used on all six dope houses in the complex. Tenants of three apartments have been evicted and the other three are pending criminal and civil trials.

In the meantime, the residents made substantial progress with their list of responsibilities. They got ten vacant buildings boarded, several alleys cleaned, and many derelict cars towed. The Hickory Square Apartments will be featured in an upcoming edition of Keys To The City.

Are the neighborhood residents satisfied with the officers\* work? They have reserved an entire restaurant and plan to hold a dinner to honor Simon, Bob and Gary.



## DOWN THE ROAD

**Is training in community problem solving still being offered?**

Yes. Approximately 300 officers went through the two-day workshop given by the COPS Coordinator's Office. In December twelve officers volunteered to become trainers. There are now seven teams of trainers who are offering training to any interested units, divisions, or districts. The training teams are: **Walt Collier and Silas Ellis; Jim Carroll and Rich Giles; Dan Crowe and George Jonas; Jim Rudden and Don Glenn; Eddie Harper and Gary Hurst, Simon Risk and Jim Whyte; and Gary Kukla and Steve Lewis.** If you are interested in attending training or scheduling training for your unit, please contact the COPS Coordinator's Office at 444-5681.

**How are specialized units involved in community problem solving?**

The entire **Mobile Reserve Unit** has been actively addressing neighborhood crime problems for some time now. Much of their work is focused on chronic drug trafficking locations. More recently, all **Narcotics Division** detectives have been assigned as liaisons to each of the city's neighborhoods and to the patrol officers that ride each area. Patrol officers can coordinate drug control strategies with these detectives. The **Traffic Safety Division and Mounted Patrol** are also going through problem solving training and applying the concept to their responsibilities.

*Keys to the City is a regular publication of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department designed to share examples of good police-community problem solving in the City of St. Louis. Project descriptions should be sent to the COPS Coordinator's Office in Room 607 of Headquarters by departmental or electronic mail. Inquiries can also be directed to 444-5681.*

**Metropolitan Police Dept., 1200 Clark Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63103**

Address correction requested

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