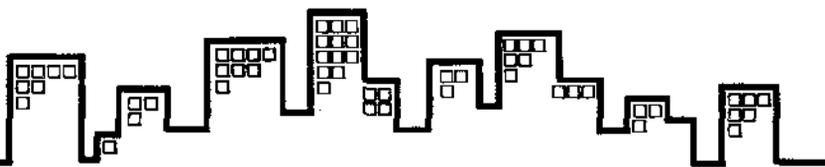


# Keys to the City



Problem Solving in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department

MARCH, 1993

VOLUME 2, No.2

## 🔑 Drug Dealing, Gang Intimidation

The **Mobile Reserve Unit** has a project underway in the **Third District** that centers around the Hickory Square Apartments, located in the 2700 block of Hickory. Part of the project was featured in the February issue of **Keys To the City**. The residents of the apartment complex complained to the manager and police about problems of open air drug dealing and gang intimidation. **Police Officers Simon Risk, Bob Laschober, and Gary Hill** first made a visual survey of the area. It was apparent that the street lighting was in desperate need of repair. Simon contacted **Mr. Ben Jones**, Director of Security for **Union Electric**, with whom he had previously enjoyed a good working relationship. At the officers' request, Mr. Jones dispatched a lighting specialist to the apartment complex to prepare recommendations. The specialist recommended, and Mr. Jones agreed, to install ten high intensity, dusk-to-dawn lights, free of charge. Mr. Jones further expressed interest in the problem solving concept and offered to help produce training tapes for police officers on problems related to utilities. The officers next talked with **Mr. Jon Pyzyk**, president

of Kohner Property and manager of the Hickory Square apartments. Mr. Pyzyk was delighted that the police were attempting to help find solutions to the neighborhood's problems. He offered to furnish any equipment they might need. Mr. Pyzyk also agreed to modify the lease agreement so that it would include a "drug clause" amendment that would allow the management to evict tenants arrested for drug charges in or around the complex.

His above efforts, combined with traditional enforcement methods, quickly closed several drug houses in the area. Simon credits the involvement of other agencies that made this project a success. Although the area is not completely free of crime, the new changes have given the residents and managers the tools they needed to help themselves.

## 🔑 Motor Vehicle Accidents

During the summer of 1992, **Sixth District Officer Stephen Wilson** investigated several auto accidents in the 10000 block of Riverview Drive. This curved section of the roadway was always submerged in running water from a nearby underground spring.

As vehicles drove over this section, they began to

hydroplane. When drivers tried to negotiate the curve they lost control of their vehicles. In most cases the vehicles simply ran off the roadway. Steve found evidence of several other unreported accidents at this same spot.

Local residents and businesspeople soon realized the hazards and inconveniences caused by the running water. Traffic was frequently congested during rush hour in the 10000 block. Cars would nearly stop as they drove over this section of highway.

Steve contacted the Street Department to advise their workers of the problem. Less than four weeks later, the Street Department had installed a French reservoir which re-routed the water under the highway.

Since the repairs were completed, Steve has not had a single accident at this location. In fact, for the past three months, only one accident has been reported in the 9500 through the 11000 block of Riverview Drive.

## 0\* = ^ Disturbances

While attending a meeting of the **Bellerive Neighborhood Association** in the Carondelet neighborhood, **Captain John Siebenman**, Commander of the First

see DISTURBANCES, p.2

DISTURBANCES, from p.1 District, was told of a neighborhood problem. The apartments located at 1022-1028. Bates were beginning to become a popular location for calls for service. This twenty-two unit apartment building was also showing signs of deterioration and had the area residents concerned. Captain Siebenman assigned the project to Police Officers Jim Keller, Dan Slay, and Dennis Dailey. Jim contacted Mr. Robert Kramer in the police department's Information Division, and asked for a printout of all radio calls to this location. The printout revealed sixty-four calls between January 1, 1992 and January 2, 1993. Of these sixty-four calls, fifty-nine were for "disturbances," of which fifty-three were coded with no report. The remaining calls were for assaults, which required a report.

The officers went to the apartment complex to speak with the resident manager. After talking with him, the officers sensed that he might be part of the problem. Not only had he failed in his managerial duties, he had rented several of the apartments to his friends. These were the same apartments that were receiving the highest number of calls for service.

The officers then spoke with the owner of the building. She admitted that the property and several of its tenants have been a problem for the neighborhood. She also pointed out that these tenants were a problem to her too. She agreed

to work with the officers and to begin eviction proceedings on seven of the families.

She too felt that the manager had failed in his duties and, therefore, fired him. At the same time, the officers strictly enforced statutes and ordinances and documented every call. The reports would later assist in the eviction process.

By the end of the year, all of the tenants had moved. Some were evicted and others relocated. The owner of the building has filed for Chapter 11 protection from creditors, intending to re-acquire the property in six months, renovate the building, and start leasing again.

The police officers are scheduled to appear at the bankruptcy hearing. Along with members of the Bellerive Neighborhood Association, they will voice their concerns to the court and bank officials. They hope that some sort of agreement can be reached that will require the owner of the property to work with the police and neighborhood residents in the future.

### Auto Theft

first District Police Officers David Menendez and Lou Puricelli noticed an increasingly large number of auto thefts in the Patch Neighborhood. As many as three autos a day were reported stolen.

By researching the C.A.D. statistics, crime by

neighborhood, and clean-up by neighborhood (all of which can easily be found in the H.S.L. system), it was evident that auto thieves were not likely to be apprehended.

David and Lou arranged a meeting with Ms. Suzanne Hart, Executive Director of Operation Safe Street, and lieutenant James Scego, Commander of Crimes Against Property, to explore ways to reduce the high theft rate in the area. The officers decided on a proactive approach to reduce the thefts, installing anti-theft collars on General Motors cars in several neighborhoods. Operation Safe Street furnished the anti-theft collars.

Because many citizens ignore crime prevention advice put out in public announcements, the beat officers sought to identify high risk victims in the Patch Neighborhood and personally make them aware of the project and encourage them to get a collar.

The officers contacted the Broadway Business Association which agreed to place an ad about the project in their monthly newsletter. Schalter Realty, located at 2700 South Broadway, agreed to install them at their office.

To insure that the collars were fitted on St. Louis vehicles only, vehicle owners were asked to show proof of residence at the time of fitting. To date, one hundred and fifty-seven collars have been installed in the neighborhood. No evaluation of impact has yet been done.

## **Key** Noise (Vehicles)

**Sixth District Detective Jerry Foster**, originally trained in the problem solving philosophy in June 1991, attended a neighborhood meeting in his area.

Expecting to hear about the serious crime problems, Jerry was surprised when the residents' number one complaint was about loud noise in the 4400 block of Anderson. Every morning residents of the block were awoken by the sound of diesel trucks starting their engines and then left to idle for twenty to thirty minutes. Neighbors also complained that these trucks routinely blocked the alleyway.

Terry agreed to look into the problem. Inspecting the site, he found conditions much more hazardous than he expected. A four family flat occupied the front half of the property and a hauling company was operating six large dump trucks from the rear. Several trucks were parked in the unfenced, unimproved rear yard. Electrical wires ran along the ground from each truck to a nearby shed. In the corner of the yard stood a 500 gallon tank, filled with diesel fuel.

The first step was to speak with the owner of the hauling company, Mr. L.R. Nunn. Mr. Nunn lived in the shed at the rear of the property. When Jerry approached Mr. Nunn with the concerns of the area residents, he was met with a great deal of hostility. Mr.

Nunn said he had been in his business at this location for thirty years and had no intention of changing his practices.

Disappointed by this response, Jerry next contacted the owner of the property, Mr. Movell Bonier, who lived in the four family flat at the same location. Mr. Bonier claimed that he just rented the property to Mr. Nunn for two hundred dollars a month and had no control over how he used it.

Still thinking that this problem should be easy to solve, Jerry contacted the 21st Ward alderman, Mr. Willie Williams. Mr. Williams explained that he had been a long-time friend of Mr. Nunn, saw nothing wrong with his business practice, and refused to get involved.

Several days later, Jerry had a chance meeting with **Ms. Mary Vita Rosmarino**, the **Court Coordinator** of the city's **Building Division** during which he described the problem. Ms. Rosmarino agreed to inspect the premises. Upon inspection, she noted several code violations and then learned that Mr. Nunn did not possess a valid license to operate his company. In fact, the Nunn Hauling Co. had never had a license to operate in the city.

Mr. Nunn was issued summonses for "No Business License" and "Operating a Commercial Business From a Zoned Residential Area". The property owner, Mr. Bonier, also was cited for numerous building code violations.

Other area officers, including **Sergeant Joe Beffa**,

and **Police Officers Ron Reeves, Sandy Hicks, Todd Meriwether, John Sabin, Marcus Fountain**, and **Jim Schnable** met and discussed strategies for addressing this problem. They agreed that until the conflict was resolved, the officers would strictly enforce law violations at that address.

Nearly every day one of the officers would visually inspect the property and issue summonses for violations. Ms. Rosmarino also continued issuing summonses for each day the license and building violations continued.

Mr. Nunn responded by applying for a business license, but was denied because the property was zoned only for residential uses.

Mr. Bonier entered a plea of guilty to the charges. Later, he changed his plea and asked for an appeal. Mr. Nunn was convicted, although he pursued appeals.

This process took eighteen months. By the time it was over, Mr. Bohler had paid a fine of \$2,600 and was held responsible for the three hundred parking violations issued on his trucks.

Eventually, Mr. Nunn moved to another part of the city zoned for commercial activity where he intends to re-start his business. Ms. Rosmarino plans to monitor this situation and insure that Nunn Hauling acquires the proper permits and licenses.

Mr. Bonier is working to return the property at 4421 Anderson to code.

 **DOWN THE ROAD****Is community problem solving consistent with the current Police Manual rules and Special Orders?**

Probably not. But, to be sure that it is, Chief Harmon has directed a thorough review of the Police Manual and the Special Orders. Every district and bureau commander was asked to nominate four persons for this task. One person from each district and bureau was selected for this big job. They will begin their review shortly. The Policy Review Team will draft revisions to the rules and orders; circulate the revisions to all commanders, supervisors, and employee associations for comment; and then submit them to the Chief of Police. The team members are: **P.O. Laura Schwarz** (1st District), **P.O. Mike Marshall** (2nd District), **P.O. Jim Carroll** (3rd District); **P.O. Kate Schlatter** (4th District); **P.O. Mark Karpinski** (5th District); **P.O. Sandra Hicks** (6th District); **P.O. Kathy Souders** (7th District), **P.O. Robert Coleman** (8th District), **P.O. McKinley Stephens** (9th District), **Detective Roy Douglas** (Bureau of Investigation), **PIRS Clerk Steve Speake** (Bureau of Patrol Support), **P.O. Lenny Gregory** (Bureau of Administration - Planning & Development), **P.O. John Hayden** (Bureau of Professional Standards - Academy), **Alice Jackson** (Bureau of Professional Standards - Personnel). All department employees are encouraged to express their opinions on policy to any of these people.

*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.*

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Address correction requested

**Is anything being done to ease the burden of radio calls?**

There are still lots of good ideas for minimizing routine radio calls that have not yet been tried, but a couple of ideas are finally getting somewhere. **Police Officer Gary Hurst** of the **Ninth District** worked with **Sergeant George Venegoni** developing a pilot program that would give St. Louis Housing Authority security officers some limited authority to issue summons releases. After over a year's worth of research and planning, the Board of Police Commissioners approved the program which will begin this summer. If it proves successful, it might be expanded to other private security organizations.

**Officer Hurst** and **Police Officer Bob Heiberger** have been trying to reduce radio calls and service time related to transporting probation and parole violators. This primarily affects the **Third District, Fourth District, Ninth District, and Prisoner Processing**. **Major George Hydar** and the **Legal Division** are now negotiating solutions that take into account the federal court order on jail crowding, statutory arrest requirements, and the manpower concerns of the Police Department, the Sheriff's Department, State Probation & Parole, and the City Jail. A resolution should be reached soon.

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