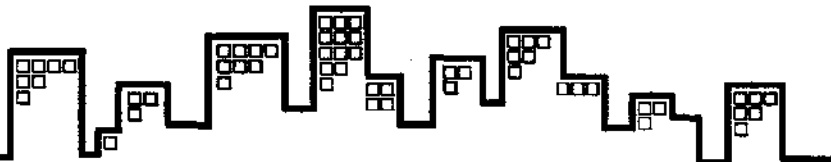


# Keys to the City



Problem Solving in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department

MAY, 1993

VOLUME 2, No.3

## Thefts From Autos (Car Clouting)

The **Central West End Association** and the **Central West End North Security Commission** expressed concern about thefts from autos along the N. Euclid Avenue shopping district to **Ninth District** beat officers **Christine Agnew** and **Joe Lehman**. Christine and Joe are assigned to the Central West End Neighborhood bike patrol.

Complaint statistics confirm that this problem accounts for a sizable percentage of the total crime problem in the immediate area. The officers\* believed that in most cases, items taken from the autos were visible from outside the car. In some cases, the vehicle was even left unlocked. The officers felt that many car owners underestimate the likelihood that they will be victimized or simply forget to secure their valuables.

Joe, Christine, and **Sergeant Dan Nichols** designed a notice to car owners that reminds them to safeguard their property.



ENJOY  
YOUR VISIT  
TO  
THE



Centra! West End  
Remember...  
LOCK YOUR CAR &  
PLACE VALUABLES  
OUT OF SIGHT INSIDE CAR.  
C.W.E. ASSOCIATION  
Officers Lehman & Agnew of Priority Nine

The local merchants have been discussing this preventive strategy lately. Most endorse the approach, while others are concerned about exaggerating their customers' fears. The notice's design is pleasing and its tone positive as the officers try to strike an appropriate balance between heightening awareness and creating unnecessary alarm.

The neighborhood association and the security commission are promoting the notice and hope to get merchants to display the signs in their shops.

The officers are now exploring printing the notices on small flyers that resemble a parking tag. While on routine patrol, officers could place them on vulnerable vehicles.

## Drug Dealing, Prostitution, Panhandling, Unsafe Buildings, Disturbances, Shootings, Gang Activity, Loitering, Public Drinking

In July of 1991 **Sergeant Terry James** was assigned to the **Seventh District, West End Neighborhood**. As a new sergeant in the district, he quickly learned that **Eastgate Avenue** was the site of a great number of radio calls.

Eastgate was described by police officers and residents as

"lawless." Reports of shootings, shots fired, open air drug markets, and fights in the street were commonplace in the neighborhood. According to Sergeant James, "When you get calls for running gun battles between rival gangs at four o'clock in the afternoon, something has to be done."

Through neighborhood meetings, Seventh District officers worked with area residents, business owners, and other city services to formulate a plan that would address this growing problem. Sergeant James realized that the solution would not come easily. In the hopes of stabilizing the community, he assigned **Police Officers Jeff Crawford, Ronnie Robinson, and Matt McDonough** to work the beat.

The officers' first goal was to make their presence known in the neighborhood. They began attending neighborhood meetings to listen to the concerns of the residents. They opened lines of communication to the businesses, strictly enforced minor law violations, and patrolled on foot whenever possible.

Sergeant James continued to work with other officers, residents, landlords, business owners, and members of city government to prepare a comprehensive plan of action for Eastgate Avenue. The group see EASTGATE, p.2

EASTGATE, from p. 1  
established the following  
specific objectives and tactics:

1. Instill a proactive, no tolerance attitude toward law violations in beat officers and area sergeants. Enforce city ordinance, housing, and sanitation violations, as well as the criminal code. The plan called for energetic some officers who would patrol on foot whenever possible and reestablish the integrity of the beat.

2. Increase communication between residents, business people, and neighborhood police officers. Officers were encouraged to attend neighborhood meetings, listen to residents' concerns, and then try to address them.

3. Reduce the drug activity on the street and in multi-family dwellings in the 600 and 700 block of Eastgate Avenue. By gaining the trust and confidence of residents, they could become the eyes and ears for the police. The Area III Dream Team and Narcotics Unit were also solicited for assistance. Landlords and property owners were to be educated about the drug trade. Patrol officers were to be trained in narcotics investigation.

4. Eliminate gang activity. The Gang Unit's help would be sought to educate the area residents, landlords, and business people. A graffiti abatement program would be organized. Social service agencies could help re-direct youths to viable programs.

5. Reduce prostitution in the area. The plan sought to involve residents by having them call the police when violations occur and get enforcement assistance from the Vice/Narcotics Section.

6. Eliminate nuisance calls like panhandling, drinking on the street, and loitering. By encouraging residents and business persons to call the police when violations occur, the police could establish control of this conduct through strict law enforcement.

7. Reduce vehicle traffic on Eastgate Avenue. The street would be closed when necessary and the flow of traffic altered.

8. Increase lighting in certain areas. The wattage of street lights in the 600 block of Eastgate Avenue would be increased.

9. Maintain, upgrade, or demolish vacant properties in the target area. Building codes were to be enforced. Property owners were to be identified and assigned responsibility to secure vacant buildings.

10. Improve the appearance of occupied residential properties. Building code violations would be enforced and officers would meet with landlords and home owners. They would also solicit assistance from various city agencies.

After several months of hard work, positive results began to show. Officers Tim Rehagen, Fran Krupp, and Laurie Lamczyk continued the work begun by Jeff, Ronnie, and Matt. They made arrests for begging,

drinking on the street, narcotics violations, and unlawful use of weapons. The officers also served several search warrants in the neighborhood.

The officers made personal contacts with all the businesses in the area, making them aware of the effort underway. They developed a working relationship with the University City Police Department which now jointly patrols the area on foot with St. Louis officers.

A storefront, donated by an area business, now serves as a sub-station in the 600 block of Eastgate Avenue. The station was painted by several volunteers and is used by all three watches.

Lieutenant Tony Wagner and Detectives Steve Strial and Emmett Gel hot made narcotics buys and executed several search warrants at various drug sets in the neighborhood. This led to additional arrests and the closure of several dope houses.

Suzanne Hart, Director of Operation Safe Street, devoted time and effort to coordinate the monthly meetings of residents, landlords, business people, city officials, and police officers. She worked with Steve Kovack, City Counselor's Office, to ensure the closure of one drug house and the seizure of another. An existing nuisance abatement law helped make the closure possible.

Cindy Helman, the Director of the Citizen Services Bureau, and Chris Howard, a Neighborhood Liaison Officer, worked to increase the wattage of street lights in the 600 block of Eastgate. The 70 watt bulbs

were replaced with 150 watt bulbs, more than doubling the amount of lighting.

The **Board of Aldermen** passed legislation that declared the area a Housing Conservation District. This declaration imposes stricter housing and sanitation codes, giving city officials more leverage against problem property owners.

The **Street Division** conducted a traffic survey, concluding that a change in traffic flow or street closures would not be very productive toward solving the crime problems.

Some neighborhood landlords formed an association to better meet the needs of the community. They hired a management company to assist any land owners that may need help or advice managing their property.

Sergeant James admits that the area still needs work, but he measures some of the successes by the type of complaints he hears from the residents. Said Sergeant James, "When we first started this, all you heard from the residents was dope, gun shots, and more dope. Now, they rarely come up with anything more than minor violations."

#### Theft of Cigarettes and Smash and Grab Burglaries

Over the past few months **Fourth District Police Officer John Anderson** noticed an increase in the number of calls

for service to the **Bess t-Rite Super Market** at 714 N. Tucker. Most of the calls involved some sort of property crime such as burglary or larceny. Researching the C.A.D. statistics, John discovered that eight larcenies, two burglaries, and two disturbances occurred at the market between January 1st and March 9th.

Both burglaries occurred after the glass in the front door had been smashed out. Cigarettes were taken from the display shelf just inside the doorway. Cigarettes were also the item of choice in most of the eight reported larcenies.

In mid March, John and **Police Officer Jim Rudden** talked with the owner of the market, Mr. Peter Chin. Mr. Chin rejected the officers' suggestion to place bars over the front door, fearing that the larger 6'x 6\* front windows would then get broken out. Mr. Chin explained that his insurance requires a \$1,000 deductible. Each break-in costs \$300 to board up and replace the glass. The 6'x 6' windows would cost significantly more to replace.

Mr. Chin also rejected other suggestions made by the officers, some as simple as moving the cigarettes behind the counter. He felt that the answer to his problems was increased police presence.

The officers agreed to research what other stores in the area were doing to prevent break-ins and thefts and get back with Mr. Chin. On the morning

of the officers' follow-up, Besst-Rite Market had been burglarized. Once again, the glass in the front door had been broken and cigarettes taken.

On this visit, Mr. Chin was a little more anxious to cooperate with the officers. John and Jim again suggested that the cigarettes be moved behind the counter, away from the front door. If there was no room behind the counter, they suggested the owner contact the distributor and inquire about different styles of display racks.

Second, the officers suggested that the owner light the entrance to the store at night. Additional lighting could be connected to motion detectors outside the store that turn the lights on if a person approaches the doorway.

Third, they suggested that the owner install door pushers on the front door. This would reduce the area of exposed glass on the door. Finally, they suggested installing an electronic control (buzzer) on the front door. This would allow the clerk to limit the number of customers in the store at any time.

As of this writing, it's unknown how many of the suggestions were implemented, but the number of calls to the location seem to have been reduced. Between March 10th and April 5, only one larceny was reported.

## **DOWN THE ROAD**

**What new technology is being developed to support community problem solving?** Several police officers helped the department's computer and communications technicians develop a system called **CAD Flagging**. CAD Flagging will automatically alert the dispatcher if a particular address to which an officer is being dispatched is either a) a known danger to the police, b) the site of hazardous materials, c) a chronic location for calls for service, or d) the site of an ongoing COPS project. Detailed information can then be given to the responding officers, including recommended courses of action.

This system has the potential to improve officers' abilities to focus on chronic crime and nuisance locations and improve officer safety. The system will be operational this month. The original suggestion for such a program came from Sergeant Gary **Kukla** and the system was designed by **Police Officer Bob Heimberger** and Systems Analyst **Darren Jenkins**. They were assisted by **Police Officers Joe Murphy** and **Terry Kowalczyk**, **Sergeants Bob George** and **Vince Stehlin**, and **Computer Programmer John Hammerschmidt**. The **St. Louis Fire Department** provided the Haz-Mat data.

Additional technology being developed or installed includes a computerized tracking system for COPS projects, voice mail for all personnel, the car radio Interconnect feature for recontacting

complainants, and a Narcotics Hotline tracking system in H.S.L.

While technological gadgets won't solve problems by themselves, they can greatly assist police officers and supervisors gain access to beat intelligence and improve their ability to stay in touch with the citizens in their beats. With a little instruction and practice, many officers are finding these new tools essential for quality police work.

**How do officers find out what resources are available in the community to help address problems?** Recently, the department purchased four copies of the **Community Service Directory** put out by the **United Way of Greater St. Louis**. One copy was given to the Station Executive Officer of each Area Station and should be kept at or near the Area Desks. **Police Officer George Jonas**, who suggested this idea, and other officers find this directory very useful for finding just the right organization for the task at hand. The directory lists the services of over 900 organizations in the area, which offer over 6,000 programs. This new resource helps give meaning to the notion that the police cannot solve all problems by ourselves. We need the help and these organizations need the referrals. **Officer Bob Heimberger** is working with the United Way to try to put this resource data in our department computer for even better access.

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

Address correction requested

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