

Greater Rockridge NCPC / RCPC Joint Town Hall - Minutes (12Y/13X)
Thursday, July 24, 2008
Rockridge Library 5366 College Avenue
General Public: 7:00-9:00PM

26 people attended the meeting including 5 OPD officers. After general introductions, Vivek Bhatia presented his latest crime statistics. He has added maps of the Oakland police areas and beats, and is now tracking 3 other Area 1 beats (7X, 10X, 13Y) as well as 12Y/13X. He is now graphing 4 categories of crime: violent crime; property crime (not cars); vehicle related crime; and other crimes (drugs, shoplifting, etc.). Current statistics show a general improvement in the 2nd quarter of 2008 over the first quarter, with no wide discrepancies between beats. Crime is still much worse than in 2005 but crime levels in 2008 are visibly improving. The full presentation is available to registered users at <http://Rockridgeresidents.org>. Registration is free.

Lt. Hamilton (OPD) noted that the 4 beats Vivek is following are among the low-crime beats in Area 1, there are other beats with more activity –for example, 6X, 2X and 2Y, and right now 4X is peaking. Vivek will consider expanding coverage to include those beats.

Chris Jackson and Lt. Hamilton both agreed that 12Y/13X is pretty quiet right now. Chris Jackson attributes this to Capt. Toribio's focus on quality of life crimes.

A resident suggested that OPD should keep an eye on the big construction site at Chabot Elementary School.

Lt. Hamilton then introduced himself, he is the special resource lieutenant for area 1, responsible for PSOs and walking officers. He attended the meeting to present the PSOs. The Crime Response Team officers are reassigned to training the recently hired officers; OPD feels that the training is very important. Lt. Hamilton thinks crime spike in April started in 12X (Temescal) with a string of robberies, auto thefts, and burglaries. OPD pulled in multiple teams and hit 12X hard, after which crime spiked in 12Y. This was about the time OPD made a number of personnel changes including a team of young, aggressive PSOs. The PSOs have been focusing on quality of life issues and he thinks they have 12Y pretty well under control. He agreed with Chris Jackson that the criminal element sees beat 12Y as a gold mine. He then introduced Officer Nick Miller, the beat 12Y PSO. Chris Jackson noted that Officer Miller has been doing a great job, especially with the 59th and Canning problem house.

Officer Miller thanked Chris Jackson for all his hard work, Chris is in constant touch with the community and channels everything to Miller, giving him the pulse of the area. Officer Miller has been working on quality of life crimes: broken windows, people loitering, etc. He actually wrote tickets for spitting on the sidewalk; has towed every unregistered vehicle he finds; and has ticketed bicyclists riding on sidewalks. Sgt. Ortiz has been working with the PSOs; a recent operation netted some big gains for the district. Sgt. Ortiz uses his experience to expand Officer Miller's knowledge.

Chris Jackson asked about the recent arrest at Martin & Ayala. Officer Miller explained that he ticketed a car with no front license plate, and the owner's reaction led to a felony cocaine arrest and a drug house in nice neighborhood.

Officer Pat Gerrans, the 12X PSO, comes to these meetings because the issues spill over both ways. Bicyclists have been a problem – they plan to do maximum enforcement of bicycle laws, starting with flyers with the bicycle laws on them. He thinks many cyclists simply don't know the law. He has been working with Officer Miller on the 59th and Canning area – there has been a lull there recently. Both PSOs have been out there, they haven't many contacts in the last few weeks after a 3-4 week period with 4 felony arrests and several misdemeanor arrests.

Chris Jackson confirmed that the area is much better than it was, and asked what's going on in Temescal. Officer Gerrans noted a recent rise in residential burglaries, auto burglaries, and auto thefts. School's out – the area is quiet. OPD is working on a plan to deal with the middle school kids when they come back in Sept.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES:

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Chris Jackson mentioned a rumor that 60% of Claremont Middle School students this fall will come from Chabot Elementary (a resident agreed that yes, 40 students total will come from Chabot), this should help as the bulk of the issues last year were from students assigned to Claremont from other areas of Oakland. Officer Gerrans encouraged people to email him at pgerrans@oaklandnet.com.

Sgt. Ortiz predicted that problems with middle school kids will happen again, and there isn't much OPD can do, it isn't against the law to run down the street and yell, and some kids know this and exploit it. There is also no way to force students to go straight home after school. He recommended neighbors watch, identify the kids, say hello to them to let them know they've been seen. Chris Jackson said the neighbors on Herman now come out on the porch when the neighborhood dogs bark, and stand and stare until they know who it is. A resident asked if the PTA members couldn't get more involved in monitoring the kids? Also, can't schools give "this is appropriate behavior" instructions in assembly? Chris Jackson agreed that a lot of kids need instructions on basic social manners, they aren't parented the way they should be. Sarah Lamb of the RDA noted that Claremont Middle School will be doing a "how to behave" session in the first 2 weeks of school, also with instructions for the parents.

Sgt. Ortiz pointed out that the really aggressive kids feed on your fear. Adults shouldn't be afraid of 10 year olds.

A resident suggested OPD talk to Sarah Lamb of Rockridge District Association about the Kid Task Force they are developing.

A resident asked about the Rock La Fleche students. They're supposed to use transit to get to school, but they walk or drive. Sgt. Ortiz repeated that there's no way to force the kids to go straight home, or to ride a bus instead of walking.

The beat officer for 13X recommended talking to AC Transit about moving the bus stop away from the Middle School corner. Chris Jackson noted that AC Transit has a 51 Task Force on the 51 line – the bus stop in front of Rockridge Library is a safety issue which has been under discussion for some time.

A resident of Birch Court complained that when parents come to pick up Claremont kids, they double-park on both sides of street, and the residents can't get in or out. The principal tells them they shouldn't go on Birch Court but they pay no attention. Chris Jackson offered to make that a priority when school starts, as a quality of life issue. Sgt. Ortiz noted that we don't want the parents *not* to come get the kids and suggested the residents try to work with the school.

A resident asked if we "can train the entitlement yuppies"? People have been making U-turns in the business district, which is disruptive and dangerous. Officer Miller noted that it's also illegal; he has been citing people for making U-turns in the business district as well as for riding bikes on the sidewalk.

A resident asked about the reports of burglaries in Temescal where doors were kicked in – what kinds of doors were these? What can residents do? Chris Jackson said that door was kicked in despite the homeowners doing everything right, but the burglars kicked the door and the frame blew out, they got all the entertainment equipment. Unless you have a steel front door with a 1.5" dead bolt, you're vulnerable to a hard kick.

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Nila Kim of Jane Brunner's office reported on the parking sticker renewal issue, the tickets they're giving out are \$70. She asked residents who have been ticketed to leave their names and addresses with Chris Jackson – the problem isn't just Area C but they're working on C right now. Nila needs the list of names to convince Parking Division that it's not just Area C. Parking Division has agreed that they won't ticket Area C for the next 2 weeks, so get your new permits during that time. Go physically down to the office, don't use mail – it's 250 Frank Ogawa Plaza, Parking Div. 6th floor. They're open 9 AM -4:30 PM – they were closing from noon to two for lunch but have gotten enough complaints that they may be staying open. They used to use a vendor, but the vendor was always late. Permit fees have NOT changed. They sent out permit renewal notices, but they missed a lot of people. Nila's email is nkim@oaklandnet.com. Nila *isn't* allowed to waiver fees – she can only put pressure on city administrator's office.

Sarah Lamb of the Rockridge District Association (RDA) reported on the Kid Task Force, they've had 2 meetings, including the Claremont PTA, various concerned parents, Officer Chimpky (OPD College Ave. walking officer), and Officer Hong (OUSD police for Claremont). They have various creative ideas:

- Residents and merchants should adopt a classroom, donating not money but time.
- A parent patrol will be out in force, getting volunteers from PTA; they'll patrol from 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM wearing CMS shirts.
- They're hoping to get some volunteer high school kids also, to be examples.

Kid Task Force meetings are once a month, the next meeting is Wed. 8/13. The members intend to support each other, and the Claremont principal and staff. The RDA will put on another community day, to get kids out into the stores, and meet the merchants. The RDA has written a letter about the bus stop – either move it to the vacant lot down the street or remove it. They're looking for more signatures. There was a "simulated armed" robbery 7/13 at Great Harvest Bread – a middle aged white man, with missing teeth was hanging around. The employees thought he was weird but didn't call the police; they hadn't taken RDA's training on dealing with suspicious persons. The man asked to break a \$20, the employee opened the drawer, and he smacked down an (empty) holster and demanded all the money. She ducked behind the wall and called OPD, who arrived promptly but didn't get him. The Merchant Watch team are sending email blasts about such incidents as close to real time as they can. First Federal Savings has a description of the suspect posted. Merchants now have block captains for every block.

A College Avenue resident complained about a bar now called *Water* (used to be *Pearl*) – they live upstairs in the building and there is excessive noise every night from 9 PM – 1 AM. They've called OPD's non-emergency number several times. The resident has talked to the restaurant manager, they're very nice, they've had a sound engineer in and have been trying to put in soundproofing. They refuse to go up to the apartment to hear what it's like. The resident judges they are well over the 60 decibel limit after 10 PM. Also, when customers leave they screech tires. The restaurant has had break-ins and attempted break-ins. A member of RCPC offered to loan the resident a sound meter. Chris Jackson suggested they take this offline – and offered to have the PSO drive by and make this a priority. The resident preferred to continue to try to handle it privately.

Titus Taylor, Personal Safety presentation

Titus Taylor is a 24 year OPD veteran, formerly a jail training officer and weapons training instructor. He transferred to Communications after the jail closed, then to Neighborhood Services. He now conducts self defense classes for women. He has a 2nd degree black belt in tae kwon do.

He began by showing a video of a woman being attacked in an elevator lobby; the attack took less than 60 seconds.

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How to be safe? Keep alert, don't take chances. Have a plan; things happen really fast.

The crime triangle: ability, desire, opportunity. The only one you can control is *opportunity*.

Report suspicious activity to OPD; program the numbers in your cell phone. 911 does *not* connect directly to OPD from a cell phone, use the posted emergency number. Different cities have different numbers for cell emergency calls, program in any that you think you might need.

How to identify suspicious people? They loiter in the neighborhood, around business, they go door-door; they can be anybody. They peer around houses. Don't let strangers in the house. Verify who they are. If they offer a phone number, look the number up yourself; don't believe sales pitches; don't let someone in to use the phone.

Police dispatchers take descriptions from the top down; height, build, weight, tattoos. Hair, beard can change. Look for unchanging characteristics: a lazy eye, gold teeth (not grilles). Vehicle descriptions: include tinted windows, chrome pipes, loud mufflers.

If you call dispatch to report something, ask for the *incident number*. Every call gets an incident number but you *have to ask* for it, they won't give it to you automatically. You can track what happened using the incident number. Keep calling back if nothing happens. Complaints in writing are better.

ABCs of Personal Safety

Awareness – will keep you out of trouble. Who's around you? Challenge someone who is too close for comfort. Defensible space – we reserve near space for intimate people. If someone stands too close to you, ask yourself why?

Body Language – what does it tell you? Is someone lurking in concealment? In a building alcove? Be aware of where you're walking, whether someone else is there. It takes your eyes *20 minutes to adjust* to the darkness after sunset. What does your body language tell the other person? Criminals look for the *easiest* target. Are you paying attention to the phone and not your surroundings? Is someone coming up *behind you*? It's hard to fight someone behind you. Walk head up, eyes forward – meet people's gaze. Make eye contact, say hello, let them know you see them.

Communication – if you notice something wrong, *tell someone*. If you feel uneasy about something, tell someone. Call the police. Tell someone *where you are* when moving around. Teach your kids to tell where they are – so if you vanish they know where to start looking.

Confidence – always show confidence. Pull yourself up, look like a bigger target. Criminals are predators, they look for the weak.

Defensive or defensible space – personal space. Cross arms across chest when talking – protection for vital organs. Put your hands out in front – says, "stay away" in every country in the world. Strike at the chin – when guys go to the gym, they don't exercise their necks. Hit the chin, knock them over, and run.

Environment – *parking lots* are very bad places, lots of places to hide. Have the keys in your hand, know where the panic button is. Stay near well lighted doorways. Be wary of ATMs. In elevators, stand *by the buttons*. Don't get into an elevator if someone already in it makes you nervous.

Fear – will either mobilize you or immobilize you. If you don't have a plan, it'll immobilize you. This is why police/soldiers train. Do you have a plan if you're in a fire? In an earthquake? If you're assaulted, robbed, or raped, what will you do? You need a plan.

Force – are you able and/or willing to use it? What can you do to distract them from attacking you?

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Get away – first chance you get.

Habit – create new and safer habits that revolve around awareness. Listen to your instinct; if the guy in the elevator worries you, don't go in. Read the book, *Gift of Fear*, on personal safety.

- Have a whistle – but it's only really useful if someone knows to respond, so make arrangements with the neighbors
- Carry a metal flashlight, a little wider than your hand, use it as a weapon
- Screecher (whistle with compressed air)
- Personal body alarm (these are both very loud)
- Pepper spray (get 2, one to practice with, one to use). Don't warn an assailant about pepper spray – just use it. And then call the police and tell them: he attacked me and I pepper sprayed him.
- Stun gun (also, just use it, don't threaten).

In the drawing for the door prizes: Monique Mendelson won the Club. Roger Mendelson, Cory Borovicka, and Steve Collier won bottles of graffiti remover spray.

RCPC Land Use Committee – Stuart Flashman

Stuart Flashman of the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) reported on the College Ave. Safeway project. The RCPC executive board has voted to oppose the Safeway project: the proposed expansion is too big, it doesn't fit the neighborhood. On Friday 7/18 they informed Safeway; on Monday 7/21, Safeway called RCPC and said, they're rethinking the project. Safeway will now set up a stakeholder group including these organizations:

- RCPC
- Claremont Elmwood Neighborhood Association (CENA)
- Rockridge District Association
- a representative of the shop owners across College Ave. from Safeway
- Neighbors Concerned with Safeway/College
- a representative of Safeway customers

Each group will send a representative to the *public* meetings to discuss the plan. Over the next 3-4 months they'll discuss the issues and hopefully produce a plan more in keeping with the neighborhood. This was the second design proposal, it was marginally better than the first but generated very strong responses. Interested parties can go to the <http://safewayoncollege.com> web site and post comments. Vivek Bhatia asked if there were any possibility they'd just give up and shut the store? Stuart noted that in other similar cases, they've scaled down to a smaller store, not shut it altogether. He thought it was unlikely they would simply close it.

Priorities

Beat 12Y

1. 5700-5900 Telegraph – 5900 Block Canning
Monitor area for suspicious people/vehicles and juveniles loitering in relation to the adult bookstore and the Washhouse. Drug Activity reported as returning to 59th & Canning area (possibly same subjects who loiter on the 5900 block of Telegraph).

This area has quieted substantially in recent weeks but continued police surveillance is appreciated.

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2. Bicycle traffic on College Avenue
Bicyclists and jaywalking pedestrians on College Ave. are getting really out of hand.

Beat 13X

1. Enforcement on homeless encampments, recyclers, and beggars/peddlers/solicitors.
Potentially related to burglaries, auto break-ins and car thefts reported from general area around Lake Temescal and College.

Traffic Priorities - Both Beats

Bicyclists running lights, riding on sidewalks, threatening pedestrians.

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