

>Members of the Willard Neighborhood held a meeting, Thursday, December
>13, 2007 at the Hillegass-Parker House, to address the issue of South
>Berkeley Crime. They had lined up:

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>• Berkeley Police Department Officer Steve Burcham, Area 2

>Coordinator

>• Police Lieutenant Hart

>• UC Police Department Captain Beckford (I think I have that name
>right)

>• John Cummins, Associate Chancellor

>• Jim Hynes, City Manager's Office

>• Ariana Casanova, Berkeley Mayor's Office Manager

>• Gordon Wozniak, District 8 City Councilmember

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>to speak with interested neighbors.

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>Let me share some of the information that got passed around at that
>meeting. Note that these are my observations as a "neighbor from
>LeConte" who dropped in – and by no means anything solicited or
>authorized.

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>City Council

>Gordon Wozniak declared that "the city council doesn't get much
>information on crime." "We need to hear people's
>perceptions, perceptions, <wbr>" he said. He raised the issue of a
>Safety Commission, because of a lack of sustained interest and pressure
>from neighborhood organizations. The city, he said, can only take
>action when it feels such pressure, and such pressure is much better
>exercised by neighborhood organizations than by calls and letters from
>individuals. He also suggested that there is a period of time after
>each council meeting where individuals can speak for ten minutes on any
>issue, and that venue was underutilized.

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>Berkeley Police Department

>1. Officer Steve Burcham put robbery statistics in Beat 7 against the
>figures city-wide. They are, for August: 3/48, September: 1/35,
>October: 3/37 and November: 2/31. He spoke of robbery as a crime of
>opportunity, largely random, without great trends, although there is an
>occasional "robbery series," and there are locations more
>vulnerable than others. The question was asked how this information
>reaches the public. Apparently the answer is on an ad hoc basis, and
>only if people put themselves on an e-mail list for that information.

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>2. Lt. Hart and Officer Burcham offered the following suggestions in
>regard to taking action that might seem to counter past advice and
>experience:

>• Don't hesitate to make eye-contact with passers-by. (This
>advice is directed particularly at women who are conditioned to avoid
>the gaze of strangers.) It sets up a better defensive posture than
>looking away.
>• Don't hesitate to call the police over suspicious behavior
>of any kind. This includes any homeless or other trespassing, on
>anyone's property. And it includes people with apparent mental
>illnesses, whom many are inclined to want to give greater leeway.
>• Berkeley residents should realize "police are not offended
>by your calls." (See #11 below).
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>3. People are conditioned to thinking 911 is a number to be used in an
>emergency only, when a crime is actually in progress, or in other
>medical or fire emergencies, but they should learn to use two additional
>numbers: 981-5900, to reach the police in a non-emergency, and 981-5911
>to reach a Berkeley Police dispatcher from a cell phone. That last
>number should be programmed into all cell phones. A call to 911 may be
>directed to the CHP and that could delay contact with a beat officer
>when what is called for is a police officer on the scene ASAP.

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>UC Police Department

>Captain Beckford gave the following statistics for crime this year, to
>date. 205 crimes of a nature which I failed to note, of which 140 (68%)
>were cleared; 159 assaults, of which 115 (72%) were cleared; 26
>robberies, of which 12 (46%) were cleared, and 7 rapes, of which 3 (42%)
>were cleared. I am still learning the language and do not know exactly
>what is meant by "cleared" and no information was given on how
>these crimes were prosecuted and what, if any, sentences were handed
>down. Question: "Do these crimes happen in Walnut Creek?"
>Answer: No.

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>Neighborhood Voices: Concerns and Suggestions

>1. Of special interest to the Willard Neighborhood is spillover of
>crime from People's Park and the inability of the city and the
>university to come together) on a solution, a problem extending back to
>1969. I will spare you the details of the discussion, since I assume
>the positions of those involved are common knowledge; I heard nothing
>last night I had not heard repeated countless times over the years,
>including the desire by some people to dismiss the issue because it is
>longterm and tends to get in the way of things that can be done here and
>now, and the insistence by other people that this is the "elephant
>in the room" which, when ignored, leaves us simply (to mix
>metaphors) shuffling deck chairs on the Titanic. There was some
>discussion of the possibility of offering rewards for redesign plans,
>but the overriding issue still seems to be the university's view
>that the city wants the university to solve the problem with its own

>funds, all the while tying their hands on any reasonable way to do so.
>And the response by some in the community that the university has the
>resources but not the will to find a solution.

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>2. One voice stressed repeatedly the "target rich environment"
>that is Berkeley, located in a corridor between two of America's
>most crime ridden cities, and the fact that there is a divide between
>high-target students, who are often less informed and less inclined to
>take action than permanent Berkeley residents, who are the eyes and ears
>of the community, and the need for a greater outreach to students.
>Captain Beckford spoke of "victimology-Captain Beckford s
>information given to all students, including web site information, which
>requires a sign-up.

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>3. There was inconclusive discussion over the relative merits of
>increased police protection against other ways of using financial
>resources, including surveillance cameras and other technology, getting
>city support for motion lighting, and private (non-sworn) policing.

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>4. In addition to the now familiar advice (better lighting, cutting
>trees and hedges, better awareness, walking with a defensive posture,
>with flashlights and whistles, and without i-pods or cell phones,
>improved rapid response mechanisms) I took note of the following new (to
>me) suggestions: setting up sting operations, outreach programs to
>landlords, robo-calls to increase awareness, greater coordination with
>university organizations such as the ASUC, COOP, IFC, and the
>Pan-Hellenic Union.

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>5. The issue of whether violent crime is at a new high, or whether it
>is simply a question of a temporary increase in awareness, one which
>will abate, as panic always does, was not addressed. Each point of view
>was stated and left for another time.

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>6. One neighbor offered the following suggestion. We focus, he said,
>on improving lines of communication among ourselves (good, obviously,
>for bringing our own awareness of the problem to bear and for acting
>collectively to bring pressure on government agencies to act in our
>interests), and between us and government and the police, but we maybe
>ought to think of communicating with the criminals, as well. Public
>posting of information on crime deterrence, the presence of neighborhood
>watch organizations, numbers to call in an emergency (especially how to
>reach a police officer fast), other points of contact, descriptions of
>persons seen and recorded and of arrests and convictions, would mark the
>neighborhood as one on high alert and with a no-nonsense attitude toward
>crime. The message should be understood to be: This is a neighborhood
>where people have eyes wide open, fast-moving fingers and phones on

>automatic dial programmed to the police.

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>7. Another neighbor spent \$300 to install four cameras which record ten

>days of video. These videos have revealed daily, or almost daily,

>attempts by people to walk onto his property, try his doorknob, etc.

>More than most people will want to do, no doubt, but the reminder to

>keep doors and windows locked tight was clearly underscored. (Ariana

>Casanova suggested this approach might run into ACLU opposition.)

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>8. Apparently, police are not allowed to arrest people walking on your

>property without your filing a complaint, unless you have posted an

>officially approved NO TRESPASSING sign. These are available from the

>police department.

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>Mayor's Office

>Ariana Casanova's comments were in line with Gordon Wozniak's.

>She stressed that the mayor's office received "hundreds" of

>e-mails a day and could not respond to each individual suggestion. She

>had special praise for the Halcyon Neighborhood Association with its

>CRIME EMERGENCY ALERTS in bold face, and for the way they seemed to be

>"collaborative, open, and cooperative" as a unit. (In fairness,

>I saw no criticism of other neighborhoods, but rather the suggestion

>Halcyon had a model to follow). The suggestion brought up the

>distinction in the way Willard, Halcyon and LeConte are organized, and

>the question of how well LeConte's current structure is set up for

>dealing with the crime issue. Ariana's argument was that there

>would be much to gain from separating out the lines of communication

>over various land use issues and the issue of crime. I interpreted that

>to mean that the land use issues, important as they are, are long-term

>issues dealing with policy and the application, misapplication, or

>failure to apply current laws, on the one hand, and the ad hoc issue of

>a real or perceived rise in violent crime, which deserves to be handled

>with a greater sense of urgency. Another, similar, consideration is

>increasing the number of people involved in becoming block captains and

>tapping into the experience of currently effective block captains (I

>have Jill Finn in mind).

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>Commentary and Suggestions: Focus on Information

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>1. Have a look at Jim Hyne's information on the Berkeley Police

>Department'Department'<wbr>s Special Enforceme

><<http://berkeley20.http://berkhttp://berkeley2http://behtt>><http://berkeley20.http://berkhttp://berkeley2http://behtt>

>and consider asking to be placed on the Community Partnership Report

>e-mail list.

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>2. I watched at this meeting how valiantly Michelle Pellegrin, the
>discussion leader attempted to keep the discussion focused. A feature
>of community discussions is the variety of issues and stress points.
>Michelle worked to keep out rehashes of the problem, debates over what
>to do with People's Park and all other "theoretical" issues
>in order to keep the focus on what actions individuals might take
>responsibility for.