



## MIDTOWN PONCE SECURITY ALLIANCE

Public Safety Report July 2007

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### ATTENDANCE at July Public Safety Meeting

- **Peggy Denby** (Moderator)
- **Judge Craig Schwall** (Fulton County Superior Court)
- **Lt. Ewing** (APD Midtown Mini-Precinct)
- **Investigator O. Curry** (APD Vice Squad)
- **Sgt. Cooper** (MPSA Patrol Coordinator)
- **Sharla Jackson** (Fulton County DA's Office)
- **Around 25 additional Midtown residents**

### SPECIAL GUEST: JUDGE CRAIG SCHWALL

Judge Craig Schwall was the special guest at the July safety meeting. He fielded questions from those in attendance.

**The Fulton County Superior Court** - Judge Schwall is among 19 judges at the Fulton Superior Court. This court handles state-level misdemeanors and felonies - Atlanta Municipal Court handles traffic violations and offenses against City Ordinance.

Under the Mayor Franklin administration the City of Atlanta discontinued handling state-level criminal cases. Those cases are now handled in State court only, and those arrested on state-level crimes are sent

directly to the Fulton County Jail. That left the City with traffic and local offenses - the city then combined municipal court and traffic court into one court system.

**Courthouse security** - Judge Schwall was appointed by Governor Perdue to replace Judge Barnes (who was shot by Bryan Nichols in the courtroom in 2005). Judge Schwall still has concerns about security in the courthouse and safety of the judges.

**Fulton County Jail** - the jail has a capacity of 2250. There are some very serious problems in that facility, such as violence, sanitation issues, and overcrowding. Fulton County needs a new jail but there is resistance from the Fulton County Commission. Our commissioner, Nancy Boxill, opposes expansion of the criminal justice system in Fulton County.

**Ricky Love** - Ricky Love was found incompetent to stand trial. He was one of our court watch cases last year after he severely beat a woman who happened to walk by him. He was remanded to the state mental hospital and is not expected to be on the streets any time in foreseeable

future. Judge Schwall presides over the case, and he must approve any change in his status. Judge Schwall will give the community ample opportunity for input before making any decisions on this case.

**Other information** - 100 armed robberies a day in Fulton County!

### ROBBERIES IN MIDTOWN

Last week Southern Voice wrote about a rash of robberies in the Midtown community. We researched the crime mapping feature on the Atlanta Police website, and found that robberies are significantly above average for the month of June.

During 2006 the monthly robbery count in the MPSA Service area averaged 4.42. During the month of June 2007 8 robbery incidents were reported within our patrol area alone through June 23rd. This means that June data is still incomplete, and still we have almost twice the average. We clearly have a very bad situation in our neighborhood. The incidents reported in the Southern Voice article, including the May incident where the editor of a local newspaper was stabbed, are more violent than we normally hear about.

We have also asked the patrol to keep an extra eye where bar patrons walk to and from their cars late at night. These areas are at high-risk not only because of potential street robberies, but also car thefts and break-ins. Also, there are others workers at area restaurants walking home through these parts of the neighborhood late at night, often with tips earned at work.

We encourage you to read the Southern Voice article at <http://www.sovo.com/2007/7-6/news/localnews/7157.cfm> and then urge city officials to give policing significantly more resources to protect our community.

#### ROBBERY ITEMIZATION – JUNE 1-23, 2007

**6/04/2007** ~ PENN AVE NE & 6TH ST ~ ROB-STREET-GUN ~ (Incident #: 071550018)

**6/04/2007** ~ PONCE DE LEON AVE & KENNESAW AVE ~ ROB-STREET-STRONGARM ~ (Incident #: 071550314)

**6/04/2007** ~ 526 PONCE DE LEON AVE ~ ROB-MISC-GUN ~ (Incident #: 071541982)

**6/10/2007** ~ 324 8TH ST ~ ROB-STREET-GUN ~ (Incident #: 071611470)

**6/10/2007** ~ 650 PONCE DE LEON AVE ~ ROB-BUSINESS-OTH WEAPON ~ (Incident #: 071611346)

**6/11/2007** ~ ARGONNE AVE NE && 10TH ST ~ ROB-STREET-GUN ~ (Incident #: 071620310)

**6/18/2007** ~ 212 PONCE DE LEON AVE ~ ROBBERY -BUSINESS-GUN ~ (Incident #: 071691394)

**6/23/2007** ~ 526 PONCE DE LEON AVE ~ ROB-STREET-STRONGARM ~ (Incident #: 071740246)

*Source: Crime mapping feature at the APD website. These are not official stats but give a good overall feel for trends in our area.*

### PROSTITUTION ISSUES

Investigator Curry from the APD Vice Squad attended the meeting, in response to our prostitution video (at [www.youtube.com/MidtownPonce](http://www.youtube.com/MidtownPonce)). Vice covers a range of crime issues including prostitution, human trafficking, massage parlor offenses, and child exploitation. He was impressed with the video, and he recognized many of the subjects from previous vice arrests.

Furthermore, he recognized some of the subjects from the controversial *Crackheads Gone Wild* DVD released earlier this year. An Atlanta man documented street people in his neighborhood

(we suspect Old Fourth Ward since we recognize some of the street people in the trailers) and produced a commercial video. More information on this DVD at <http://www.cornerstoneentertainment.net> and at <http://www.crackheadsgonewild.com>.

He warned that most of the prostitutes are under the influence of some kind of drug – crack, ecstasy, heroin, and/or crystal meth. Furthermore, most of these street criminals normally carry blades and are prepared to cut up anyone perceived to be getting in their way.

The reality is that Atlanta is plagued with several prostitution areas even worse than what we have – including Moreland Avenue, Metropolitan Parkway, and the Riverside area off of Bolton Road.

A core part of the problem lies in the court system. The judges need to understand how street people activity – not just prostitution – affects neighborhoods such as ours. The residents need to take the opportunity to look judges in the eye and tell them we are tired of these problems. Our court watch system is designed to meet this need though it takes a considerable time investment on the part of neighborhood residents. We need more volunteers to go with us to Court Watch – this often comes up at short notice. Please respond when we send out the next request for attendance – this is critical to cleaning up our neighborhood and getting more jail space to house these dangerous people.

Atlanta Police published vice arrests on its websites. At [www.atlantapd.org](http://www.atlantapd.org) there is a section called “vice arrest,” with pictures of prostitutes from all over Atlanta (though most of them are from the other major hotspots).

Two other videos made by a neighborhood volunteer caught johns picking up prostitutes in company vehicles (we reported these earlier). While it is rare that we catch someone in their company vehicle, please be sure the MPSA will run with anything we find out about a john picking up prostitutes. Some of the johns picking up prostitutes even have their children in their cars.

A major prostitution detail is forthcoming for our area...

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### NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

This year's National Night Out will be held in the same place as last year (Myrtle and 6th). We initially wanted to do it at Vedado and Greenwood, but the logistics of that location are too difficult - closing Greenwood and Vedado would cause too much chaos). The event will be held on Tuesday August 7th, from 6 to 8pm.

We have located tables and chairs to use, and we have a sponsor for the Moonwalk and even a snow cone machine. This will be our 5th going away party for crime, and is shaping up to be a really fun one!

We will need volunteers for set-up and break-down - please contact us at [info@midtownponce.org](mailto:info@midtownponce.org)

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### ISSUES IN PIEDMONT PARK

Chris Nelson of the Piedmont Park Conservancy was in attendance at the meeting and told about a serious problem in the park. As this problem has been presented to us this is probably the most dangerous ongoing situation we have encountered so far...

Every Sunday evening there is a large and unruly crowd ranging from 500 to over 1000 people who gather at the 12th Street entrance. Among this crowd are people engaging in fights and other

violent behavior, and various illegal activities such as drug use and public indecency. The problem continues to escalate weekly and we fear that if some concrete solutions are not found, someone will be seriously injured or even killed. Needless to say, most regular park visitors are afraid to use this area of the Park on Sunday evenings. An off-duty officer was struck by a car on Father's Day Sunday when he tried to stop someone for some kind of disorderly conduct. The managers of Willy's and Quattro were quoted as saying this has become a serious problem for his businesses. There have also been reports of someone being injured by a thrown brick, and another who was cut in the face with a knife.

This is somehow tied in with a group that has been meeting there for several years. They are organized to some degree into groups, known as 'houses,' and into something known as "vogue dancing." We are told the movie *Paris is Burning* would shed more light on them. We don't fully understand what this group is but we do not think there is anything problematic about the group's intentions or philosophy - and certainly nothing problematic about vogue dancing - but some bad elements are definitely coming into their midst. As we understand it, it is apparently somewhere between a fraternity and a sub-culture of mostly African-American gay men and transgenders. We would love to hear from someone who could explain this fully to us.

We will be looking more into this situation but please share your experiences and observations with us.

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#### APD ROADBLOCKS

On the morning of July 11th Atlanta Police conducted a roadblock on Piedmont Avenue. They were checking mainly for driver licenses, insurance, and arrest warrants. 15 citations were issued, mainly for seatbelt violations. 2 Drivers were arrested for not carrying insurance, and another arrested on an active warrant. 1 vehicle was impounded.

Additional roadblocks are planned for various locations and times in our area.

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#### MPSA PATROL REPORT

**Burglary**- Sgt. Cooper arrested a burglar in the act. Because of street construction he was cut off from 10th Street and had to loop back via Monroe, and then back down Piedmont. While passing by Ansley Park he saw a burglar breaking into a house on Piedmont near Ansley Mall. He arrested the subject when he came back out the window. Though this incident was not in our patrol area, this suspect spent some time in our area and was likely to hit one of our homes.

He also allegedly burglarized a restaurant on Juniper earlier that day to steal liquor, and is suspected in another burglary. The suspect, 45-year-old Larry Brewer, remains in the Fulton County Jail on burglary charges. He has an extensive history and prison record. This criminal is now on our court watch list.

#### **EXCERPTS FROM THE MPSA PATROL LOGBOOK**

**6/10** – Patrol arrested a prowler.

**6/11** – A suspicious person was interviewed and was found to have an active warrant for a probation violation. He was on probation for auto theft.

**6/23** – Felony drug arrest – see story to side.

**6/23** – 6 vehicle impounds and 15 parking tickets during Gay Pride

**6/24** - 4 impounds and 25 parking tickets during Gay Pride

**6/29** – Larry Brewer arrested for burglary on Piedmont

**7/05** – Suspicious person found to have an active warrant for larceny from cars (car break-ins)

**7/06** – Subject was observed smoking crack. Subject also found with officer, and was arrested for obstruction.

As an aside, a resident in Ansley Park immediately made a nice financial contribution to the MPSA...

**Felony Drug Bust** - an MPSA officer observed a subject driving along 10th Street erratically. He nearly ran over some Blake's patrons as they walked along 10th Street, and nearly hit a taxi-cab too. The MPSA officer was able to stop the driver, and found large quantities of MDMA (known as Ecstasy). Mark Dotson was arrested on felony drug possession, but made bail quickly. He is also on our court watch list.

**Special event traffic issues** – Home Depot sells orange cones that you can use during neighborhood events to discourage people from blocking your driveway, etc.

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### DRAMATIC PURSE SNATCHER ARREST

About 11:30 on the morning of July 11th MPSA Patrol helped catch a snatch thief from the area of Charles Allen and 8th. He snatched a woman's purse around Grady High and ran and hid in the shed behind a house on 9th Street. The APD helicopter was also involved in the pursuit. The victim was infuriated and will likely follow through and prosecute.

Sgt. Cooper also heard from Officer England later in the shift and it turns out this guy has been locked up under several names. Hopefully the fingerprints will confirm his true identity. He has an extensive criminal background. In order to add this case to our court watch list Officer England immediately contacted Sharla Jackson (Fulton DA's office) and the MPSA has done the same. This is one character we do not want back in the neighborhood.

Officer England is the burglary investigator for Zone 5. He has been instrumental in bringing about a significant reduction in burglaries in recent years. He also worked for MPSA on the side during our first two years of patrol operations.

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### AUTO THEFTS

Channel 46 News recently ran a special report on auto thefts in Atlanta. According to their reports, a car is stolen every 20 minutes in the metro area, and there has been an increase of 18% in the last year.

They have posted articles, video, and interactive graphics at <http://www.cbs46.com/news/13646772/detail.html>. Their interactive graphic shows all of zip code 30308 and the lower part of 30309 solidly covered with dots representing a separate incident.

The stats we have gotten so far (availability has been erratic) also reflect a very serious increase in car thefts.

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### MPSA MAILBAG

**Two things to keep in mind when reading mailbag items:**

1. **They do not necessarily reflect the view of the MPSA**
2. **They are probably just the tip of the iceberg – much goes on that we do not hear about. We like for people to share their information and insights**

**New MPSA video** - *Awesome job, thanks! I think the mayor needs to see this, the police chief needs to see this, Anne Fauver and all of the at-large councilmembers need to see this and so does Lisa Borders. I even wonder if we could give this to the prosecutors so that when these*

people are arrested, they can play it for the judge. If they don't start doing something about it, then maybe the news channels need to get hold of this footage. Thank you for capturing this information. Identifying these people is the first step in eradicating the problem. **MPSA Note: this is in reference to our prostitution documentary at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZCDBKdD4s0> , with its footage of prostitutes menacing with rocks and sidewalk tiles and closes with Bryan Kitts (aka "Gabby") throwing a drink on the MPSA Patrol vehicle.**

**Man menacing woman** - I called the police and MPSA Patrol (not on duty) to report a thin black guy without a shirt walking around 6th, 7th, Durant and Glendale. I was headed to work and turned around because he was following a young lady walking her dog. I gave her a lift home and this guy was trying to get into my car too. She told me that he was following her and showing his \*private parts\* to her. Poor thing was freak ed out but I took her home.

**Midtown "Village – Our forthcoming challenge.**

... As we drove around Midtown we discovered our next big challenge: Crescent Avenue. We actually heard the DJ's on Q100 the other day talk about the next Buckhead Village, and that being Midtown Village or Crescent Avenue. It was pretty crazy for a Tuesday night and the line for Opera (formerly 1150) was at least two blocks long. I just say, we need to keep an eye on that area. We know the manager of a nearby establishment so we will get his take on the issue. But the LAST thing we need is a Buckhead Village in Midtown. No thank you! I will say TAP had a big crowd on their patio, and we heard NO outside music.

**Vet with Jag – he's baaack!** My neighbor tells me the vet with the broken Jaguar scammer on Charles Allen & Mentelle. At 6AM this morning he was flagging down cars at the speed bump where the cars had to slow down. His M.O. today is that his car broke down on North Avenue, and needed money for gas, etc. It finally dawned on my neighbour that this story sounded awfully familiar. He looked respectable – dressed in Bermuda shorts and wearing a porkpie hat. I have not heard about this guy lately but apparently he is back on the street.

**Theft of catalytic converter** - On Friday evening, June 22<sup>nd</sup> the catalytic converter was removed and stolen from my SUV in the condominium building's parking lot. A section of the muffler/catalytic converter was cut out most likely with a saw, which would take less than three minutes. The repair shop said that there has been a rash of these crimes for trucks and SUV's. Due to their height thieves can quickly roll under a truck to cut out the catalytic converter. Cars that are low to the ground are generally safe from this. According to the repair shop, this crime ordinarily happens in industrial areas. These stolen catalytic converters are resold – there is a market because they are needed to pass vehicle emissions tests. **MPSA NOTE: We found an interesting article on this new nationwide trend at [http://www.fleet-central.com/af/t\\_inside.cfm?action=article\\_pick&storyID=1178](http://www.fleet-central.com/af/t_inside.cfm?action=article_pick&storyID=1178) . This article also mentions that the culprits are often drug addicts – the open-air drug market along Parkway Drive and Boulevard draw plenty of those into our area...**

**Exhibitionist (we forgot to run this in our last mailing but we want to know if this is happening somewhere else too)** - A naked man has been observed \*playing with himself\* in our parking area on the side of the Piedmont Avenue Condo building. He has been doing this for months. He's a thin medium -dark complexion black man, around 5'6" to 6" He wears a dew rag over his face, but otherwise is nude. One time when the police came, they found his clothes out front, but he had left. He's usually out in the early morning, after sunrise but before anyone in our complex is out - the latest anyone's seen him was around 7:15am. He doesn't run away when seen, but disappears within a few minutes after being noticed - he seems to have a good feel for how long it will take for the cops to show up. Given the fact they found the clothes but not the suspect last time, it's a good guess he lives nearby.

**Nasty street people** - well one morning last week as i approached third and piedmont I saw two (transvestite) prostitutes out there. Then from the other direction came a vagrant - a total

*crackhead type. He had clearly just rolled out from under a bush - bloodshot glassy eyes. I would dare to speculate that he had just stolen the bike he was riding because something that nice would not be within his means.*

*He saw the prostitutes, and started preaching to them. He started yelling that they were an abomination and would go straight to hell. I was pondering the theological conundrum that a thieving crackhead could feel righteous enough to tell anyone else they were going to hell. I kept trudging along but looked back to see that the prostitutes had thrown the bike into the street, and they were smacking him around.*

*Amusing observations aside, it is utterly disgusting that they are crapping on the sidewalks. Their presence and habit of defecating on the sidewalk creates a very real public hazard. Also, the number of crack baggies has started to increase - nobody could convince me that this is just a simple coincident.*

*Is there anyone of any competence at City Hall or the APD that can actually help?*

**Street People on Parkway Drive** - *I help manage a property on Parkway Drive near Midtown. The property is vacant and we are having a hard time renting the apartments because of the [menacing street people doing drugs, prostituting, and other illegal activity] on the street corner. Would your organization be able to assist in keeping an eye on the property and how much would it cost? Also, I have contacted the police numerous times about the people loitering in front the house, and they keep telling me that they have patrol units frequenting the area, but whenever I go there the guys are on the sidewalks selling drugs. Do you have any advice? I look forward to hearing from you.*

**Theft from front porch** - *I woke up this morning to find that someone had dug out my two potted palms on my front porch and stolen them. It is very trivial in light of everything else that seems to be going on in the neighborhood. Nonetheless, I thought I should report it because someone was on my front porch last night for a period of time stealing my property. **MPSA Note: While we have to prioritize, this is not trivial to us – there is way too much of this going on in the neighborhood.***

**MPSA Response:** First off, Parkway Drive is not in our service area and we are not in a position to expand our service area in the foreseeable future. While we need to keep our service area large enough to fund our patrol adequately, the service area also needs to be small enough to manage effectively. This balance is our basic challenge.

The drug dealers and other criminals have Parkway Drive and Boulevard securely in their control. The drug dealers are so well organized in the Bedford Pine area, and even recruit 12-year olds to work as look-outs. It is very difficult for the police to penetrate this problem area. The drug dealers have keys to all of the Bedford Pine buildings. Many of the tenants down there take in unauthorized boarders into their apartments – many of which are the drug dealers and prostitutes plaguing the area.

Most tenants in the Bedford Pine apartments (73 buildings of Section 8 housing known as Bedford Pine Apartments and owned by Continental Wingate) dare not to call the police for anything. Whenever we have the rare opportunity to talk to a Bedford Pine tenant, we must meet them in another part of town because of their personal safety issues.

In order to effectively flush out the criminal elements out of that general area one of two things needs to happen:

**1. Massive problem-oriented policing tactics on the part of the Atlanta Police Department**

Yes, the police do patrol down there as best they can, and respond to calls as best they can with

the limited number of police officers they have to work with. But there is not enough political will in the city to fund our police department adequately.

**2. Massive redevelopment.** This would have to be done in a relatively short period of time rather than gradually. Most the Boulevard-Parkway corridor would need to be bulldozed and built new. Until the drug gangs are flushed out of that area, gradual redevelopment is severely inhibited. As Bedford Pine apartments are now on a year-to-year contract with the Federal Government, we are hoping they will seize the right opportunity and allow this area to be redeveloped.

Only with one of these two approaches could we ever hope that any measure of general civility could be established in that area.

I wish we could give you a better answer, but this is a long-term effort requiring a coordinated multi-level approach. In the short-term, however, there are public safety meetings to attend. These meetings are the places to connect with people working on those issues. These efforts need lots of participation and energy...

**1. NPU-M holds a safety meeting every month.** Their next meeting will be Monday July 16, 2007, from 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm. As far as we know these are held at the community center on Angier Avenue but you may want to confirm time & location with Melissa Firestone (Committee Chair) at amelissafirestone@yahoo.com or 404-892-1079. This group covers the area from Ponce de Leon southward.

**2. We also hold a public safety meeting every month for the area north of Ponce** These are held the second Monday of every month, 7pm, at Mary Macs (Ponce & Myrtle Street). While officially Parkway Drive is not in our area, we do share great concern about the conditions in that area.

**BE SAFE, ENJOY THE NEIGHBORHOOD, AND HAVE FUN!!! (yes, good things really are happening in the 'hood most of the time... but not always, unfortunately)**  
**- Your neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance**

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SPONSORS WHO PROVIDE A MAJOR ENHANCEMENT TO YOUR PATROL'S EFFECTIVENESS:

**Westminster Commons**

**Midtown Neighbors Association**

**The Sembler Company**

**Midtown Tire, Inc.**

**Post Parkside**

**Ackerman & Company**