



## MIDTOWN PONCE SECURITY ALLIANCE

Public Safety Report – 11 / 2007

### GENERAL ISSUES :

**Robbery Suspect (p. 1) | Court Watch (1) | Major Community Clean-up (1-2)**  
**Homeless Sweep (2-3) | MPESA Patrol activity (3-4)**

### MAJOR DISCUSSIONS AT SAFETY MEETING: :

**Tips from MARTA Police (p. 4-5) | Solicitor General Carmen Smith (p. 5-6)**  
**Assault/attempted mugging (6-7)**

### ROBBERY SUSPECT - BE ON THE LOOKOUT!

Another robbery occurred in the neighborhood this past Saturday night. From the descriptions we are getting, we believe that several robberies were all committed by the same person (accompanied at times by others). We need your help in finding this dangerous person to get him off the streets. The suspect is described as follows:

- Black male, medium to dark complexion,
- Chin-length thin dreadlocks,
- Early to mid 20's in age,
- Approximately 5'9" in height,
- Thin, baby-face – appears to have never needed to shave,
- Carrying a silver handgun.

***He was last seen wearing a Philly 76 shirt and ball cap.***

If you see anyone fitting this description, do not approach the individual, but call 911 and tell them there is a suspicious person and give them the address and information, then call the MPESA Patrol number.

### COURT WATCH

Ricky Love will have a final plea hearing on November 29th. This is the individual who viciously beat a woman and had terrorized people along Ponce de Leon Avenue and other places for years. We need court watch attendees for that morning, as this is a high-priority case involving a clearly dangerous individual.

### MAJOR COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP ON DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>

City Councilman Kwanza Hall asked us to forward the following:

*Since your neighbors immediately to the south of the MNA/MPESA area will be involved in a massive cleanup effort that day, he is hoping that MNA/MPESA members or the companies they're affiliated with might want to pitch in and join the fun. I'm sure you've noted the media coverage re the new master plan for the neighborhood, a process which began last month. Here's a link to yesterday's front-page coverage in the AJC:*

[http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2007/11/13/Fourthward\\_1114.html](http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2007/11/13/Fourthward_1114.html)

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*We're organizing the work through each of the 5 neighborhood associations in the Old Fourth Ward. If you think MNA/MPSA members might be particularly interested in "meeting the immediate neighbors" to the south, then helping out the Central Atlanta Neighbors in cleaning the area to the west of Boulevard to Piedmont would be the best bet.*

*Basics re the event: The day kicks off at 8:30 am with coffee and donuts on the sidewalks of Boulevard, just south of North Ave. KISS 104.1 will be broadcasting live throughout the event. 9 am: Community parade to the 5 neighborhood substations/welcome centers, led by Councilmember Kwanza Hall and the Grady High School band. Community cleanups by the 5 neighborhood associations in the Old Fourth Ward until 1 pm, ending with lunch.*

*Folks with questions can contact me here in*

- *Kwanza Hall's office ([khall@atlantaga.gov](mailto:khall@atlantaga.gov) or call 404-330-6038)*
- *Queen Merriweather, who's managing the project for us - [qmerri@aol.com](mailto:qmerri@aol.com) or 678-458-3828.*

*Many thanks for anything you can do to promote the event to MNA/MPSA members. Until this underserved neighborhood in the middle of District 2 gets the attention it has needed for decades, many of the challenges facing Midtown neighbors will continue... We're asking Inman Park to consider helping out in similar fashion to the east of Boulevard and the ADNA to help out in the Sweet Auburn/west of Piedmont area. Needless to say, this is part of keeping the Old Fourth Ward moving forward as it continues the master planning process:*

*<http://www.atlantaga.gov/government/planning/o4w.aspx>*

**HOMELESS SWEEP ALONG THE DEFUNCT TRACK (details from a post-briefing report by APD)**

On Saturday November 17, 2007 officers and supervisors from Atlanta Police (including K-9 units), Norfolk Southern Railway Police, MARTA Police, CSX Railway Police, Midtown Blue and social service personnel conducted a sweep of the defunct railroad track which will eventually become the Beltline. Support for the detail was provided by Midtown Green, Community Service workers from City of Atlanta Municipal court and the Gateway Center. Midtown Green provided supervision for the people who were doing their community service hours from City Court.

The Gateway Center had reserved both intake personnel and bed space from the rail detail.

As a primary goal they targeted homeless individuals living along the track to offer services and referrals to services to them. Additionally, the officers were checking for active warrants and were on the lookout for areas being used to drop stolen goods in the surrounding neighborhoods.

35 homeless people were contacted and either given transportation to the Gateway Center or given a flyer with information regarding the services of the Gateway and a map to the Gateway. Field Interview Forms were completed on each of these individuals and

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a photo was taken for follow up purposes. Also criminal trespass warnings were issued in appropriate locations.

- 2 persons were arrested for outstanding warrants.
- 1 stolen vehicle was recovered from the tracks along the Beltline.
- 4, city garbage truck, loads of debris were collected from the railways.

2 local television stations, Channel 11 and Channel 46, broadcast positive stories about the detail.

According to APD this detail was a success on many counts:

- The cooperation between the agencies and organization was tremendous and contacts were made that will greatly assist with future endeavors.
- All personnel worked to make this a successful detail
- The Helicopter support was found to be extremely helpful and will be used as a valuable tool in future initiatives.
- All agencies found that working with both social services and law enforcement increased the probability for long term solutions to problems.

Along with Lt. Trudy Boyce the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance wishes to express appreciation to all the agencies and organizations involved in the effort:

- Major Lane Hagin, Zone 5 | Colonel Wayne Mock, Midtown Blue | Commissioner David Scott and Tracy Little, Public Works | Special Agent in Charge Al Shackelford, Norfolk Southern | CSX Railway Police | MARTA Police | Atlanta Police Zone 2 | Major Cal Moss, SOS | Sergeant D. Tolleson, Helicopter Unit | Zone 5 HOPE Team | Zone 5 FIT Team | St. Joseph Mercy Care | The Gateway Center | Atlanta Beltline, Inc.

## **MPSA PATROL ACTIVITY**

### ***Vagrants***

We have seen a surge in vagrant activity throughout the service area. We are combating a handful of nests especially along the Ponce corridor. One of them is a spot along Ponce near the entrance to the Burger King. The MPSA Patrol, with the help of board members and volunteers, has cleaned this nest out once or twice a week. The shrubbery needs to be cut back.

We have attempted to contact the Community Friendship, a nonprofit organization that owns the property. So far they have not responded. Given that they are a nonprofit organization we are willing to provide volunteers to do this work (we need their permission first). If anyone has a contact with this organization, we could use your assistance. Also, if you have a good weed-whacker we could use a hand – this would take less than one hour. This nest is believed to be a factor in car break-ins at a nearby business.

Our patrol has also had an increase in calls about shoplifters at area businesses. The patrol intercepted and arrested several shoplifters, who are invariably vagrants.

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We are looking into the use of skunk oil, a non-hazardous agent used in other places to address urban camping. Police in other jurisdictions and in other countries have achieved good results spraying abandoned buildings and outdoor campsites where vagrants, junkies, and gutter punks chronically camp, drop stolen goods, and use drugs

***Prostitution***

As always the patrol receives calls from residents about prostitute infestation in the Southwest portion of the service area. Street drugs, noisy activity, vandalism, and belligerence have been observed and reported. There seem to be fewer but the ones around are more aggressive in their gang-like way of life.

***Burglary calls***

Early in October the MPSA Patrol assisted with an unusual burglary. Police officers responding to the call intercepted the suspect - a nut case who thought he owned the building. Once they determined his true identity it turned out that he has a Peachtree Pine address.

A resident in Old Midtown (residential area east of Midtown) called about a burglar previously arrested and returning to ask for money. This subject will be arrested for criminal trespassing the next time he shows up.

***Robberies***

This time of year is traditionally dubbed the robbery season, and Midtown is clearly no exception. On a Sunday evening four culprits in a probably stolen Lexus robbed customers in the parking lot of a local restaurant around 10pm. One had a shotgun, the other three each had a pistol.

***Misc.***

MPSA Patrol also intercepted a 911 called about a domestic disturbance on Vedado Way. Two people – a male and a female – were arrested as a result.

Sgt. Cooper has developed a criminal trespass warning program to assist local businesses. Member businesses now have a form to use in serving criminals trespass warnings. The business calls either the MPSA Patrol or the police, a law enforcement officer signs the form as a witness, and with this documentation a business has a solid basis to have a subject arrested for criminal trespassing if they return.

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**MIDTOWN PUBLIC SAFETY MEETING FOR NOVEMBER**

**ATTENDANCE**

20 people attended the September safety meeting, including:

- ***Peggy Denby*** - Moderator
- ***Special Guest Carmen Smith*** – Fulton County Solicitor General
- ***Lt. Foster*** – MARTA Police Department

## **MARTA POLICE**

### ***General safety tips***

At the November safety meeting Lt. Foster of MARTA Police gave us some personal safety precautions while riding the MARTA trains, and in general. As is the case everywhere, we are coming up on the “robbery season” – robberies, car thefts and break-ins, and burglaries typically spike during the winter months. We have also found this to be true in Midtown security issues.

When in public places, especially crowded places, it is best to keep handbags securely around your shoulders, with zippers and flaps toward your body. Wallets should be carried in front pockets.

Pickpockets typically work in groups of three. One culprit will initially steal the bag or wallet and pass it to another individual. The second individual will often pass it to a third. In the end the person who actually stole the wallet does not have it. This is a common modus operandi worldwide.

When out shopping do not leave valuables in plain view in your car and resume shopping. Place them into your trunk, and consider moving your car to another location if you need to resume shopping at the same shopping center.

### ***About public safety while using MARTA***

Each transit station is equipped with blue and white emergency phones. These phones will automatically call the security dispatcher upon picking up the handset.

From your cell phone you can call 404-848-4911 to reach the security dispatcher. If you use MARTA frequently speed dials may be available. These numbers vary from one provider to another.

MARTA police officers ride the trains, and work in pairs covering a range of stations. Two officers normally cover the stretch from Civic Center station to Arts Center station – riding back and forth. Sometimes they are together; otherwise they ride the trains separately back and forth between their boundary stations.

## **FULTON COUNTY SOLICITOR GENERAL**

**Carmen Smith** was our special guest this month. She has served as the Solicitor General for Fulton County since 1997. She was initially elected to this position by the voters of Fulton County, and was re-elected in 2000 and 2004.

The Solicitor General is a distinctly separate elected official from the District Attorney, and therefore does not work under or in the DA's office. The DA's office prosecutes felonies, while the Solicitor General handles misdemeanor cases in Fulton County.

This segment of the caseload includes simple battery, criminal trespass, driving under the influence, and shoplifting. Her office does not deal with city ordinance violations, which present the bulk of the arrests made by the Atlanta Police – those go through the Atlanta Municipal Court.

Once a case is bound over, the Solicitor's Office determines the best course of action. They can file formal charges with State Court, dismiss the charge, refer the case to a pretrial program or transfer it to another office if appropriate.

When the defendant comes to court for arraignment, he may enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. If the defendant pleads guilty, the judge may sentence the defendant at that time. If the defendant pleads not guilty, the case will be scheduled for trial. Defendants may ask for a bench trial - in which the judge alone hears the case – or a jury trial which is comprised of Fulton County citizens.

Under the laws of the state the commission of a misdemeanor makes the defendant liable to a \$1000 fine (\$5000 for a *high and aggravated* misdemeanor) and 12 months in jail. While these cases usually result in a fine, the defendant normally receives 12 months probation in lieu of a jail term. In some instances cases may be resolved by pre-trial intervention and diversion programs.

When a defendant faces a compound charge which includes a felony the District Attorney will take the case.

#### **The role of the victims and witnesses**

In order to successfully prosecute a case, victim and witnesses play a crucial role. Without the victim or witness there can be no case.

Victims have a right to be notified of court proceedings. If they are physically unable to attend they may designate an adult relative to attend the hearing. When necessary the prosecutors can have victims wait in a separate area from the accused.

#### **ASSAULT AND ATTEMPTED MUGGING**

One attendee at the safety meeting recently experienced an assault and attempted mugging on Ponce de Leon. His write-up is as follows:

*It was 6:50pm on November 9, 2007 and I was walking from my apartment on 3rd and Piedmont Ave. to a friend's house on 3rd and Durant. I walked along Ponce de Leon rather than walk through the neighborhood seeing how it was dark thinking Ponce would be safer. As I crossed Argonne Ave on the north side of Ponce I made eye contact with a man about 10 feet ahead of me. I thought we were establishing who was going to right and left as to avoid running into each other, but as it turns out he was planning on running into me. He bumped me and kinda slobbered on me.*

*I created distance between us with my arms and he told me he was hungry. I told him I couldn't help him but he kept bumping me and telling me to give him what he wanted and that I knew what he wanted. I was speaking loudly and moving my hands about as to draw attention to myself. People were watching from the car wash on the opposite corner and from Krispy Kreme, but no one made a move.*

*I ended up backing up into the first lane of traffic on Ponce as to try to get away from the man thinking he would not follow me into the street, but he did and continued to bump me. I moved into the second lane of traffic and cars were now coming at us and going around us while I was telling him to keep on walking and trying to get him to realize that*

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*he was going to get the both of us hit by a car and also trying to get him to realize that he was standing in the middle of Ponce trying to mug me.*

*Traffic stopped as the light must have changed and I notice a cab about 3 cars back, so I started moving toward the cab keeping an eye on the man. As I opened the door on the cab and made myself around the other side of door to get into the cab he shoved the door against me causing the doors top edge to hit me in the chin and cut my face which started bleeding all over my clothes. I was holding the door with my right hand after I got into the cab and the man had both of him hand in the door not allowing me to close the door.*

*I dialed 911 with my left hand and was yelling at the 911 operator that I was being mugged and that I was bleeding and gave her the location that I was at and to send the police. She was asking me for my name and I was yelling the information to her when the man told me that he was going to give me a free pass and that this was my free pass. He let go of the door and walked away.*

*I had the cab driver take me to my house and got in my car to look for the man so that I could call the police to come and get him off of the street. I never found him after searching for 20 minutes. I called the police again as they never showed the first time. I told the officer the story and he told me that the person was just an aggressive panhandler. He also told me that I should get a gun so that I could shoot the man if this ever happens again. **MPSA Note: In later dialog with the victim emphasized that he does not want to promote fear in the neighborhood by carrying any kind of weapon. The MPSA also does not want to have people walking around the neighborhood with guns, as too many things can go wrong – both in terms of public safety and in terms of the image of our neighborhood. We urge people to consider carrying pepper spray instead, as long as this is done discretely. Also, the October safety report focused on dangerous and menacing street people – this is definitely an ongoing issue for us.***

**STAY SAFE! Please encourage your neighbors to join the MPSA!**

*- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance*

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**WITH MUCH GRATITUDE FOR OUR COMMUNITY PATROL SPONSORS**

*The Sembler Company*

*Post Parkside | Midtown Neighbors' Association*

*Midtown Tire, Inc. | Ackerman & Company*

**AND OF COURSE THE MANY RESIDENT AND BUSINESS MEMBERS!!!**