

**DEPARTMENT OF  
POLICE**

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**April 21, 2005**

**City Council**  
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session:

**SUBJECT: THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS AND  
THE RELATIONSHIP OF STREET LIGHTING TO THE REDUCTION OF  
CRIME.**

**LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT:** Citywide, All Council Districts

**RECOMMENDATION:**

This is an informational report regarding:

- The Neighborhood Watch Program and its effectiveness in crime reduction.
- The use of lighting mechanisms to reduce or prevent crime.

**CONTACT PERSON(S):** Samuel Somers, Captain      277-6150  
Richard Shiraishi, Captain      433-0895

**FOR COUNCIL MEETING OF:** May 3, 2005

**SUMMARY:**

The Neighborhood Watch Program and the installation and/or improvement of lighting are two ways of reducing fear and crime.

**COMMITTEE/COMMISSION ACTION:** None

**BACKGROUND:**

**A. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH**

Neighborhood Watch is a community based crime prevention program that has been in existence in Sacramento for decades. The Neighborhood Watch Program empowers people

*The mission of the Sacramento Police Department is to work in partnership with the Community to protect life and property; solve neighborhood problems, and enhance the quality of life in our City.*



to prevent crime, forges bonds between the district police officers and the communities they serve, and builds a broader foundation for community involvement.

A Neighborhood Watch Program can be initiated around any geographical unit, such as a neighborhood, apartment complex, or business area. Currently, there are 279 Neighborhood Watch Groups, 59 Apartment Watch Groups, and 67 Neighborhood Associations within the City. A resident or community organization can start a Neighborhood Watch Program by calling the police department who will assign a Community Service Representative (CSR) from a substation who will provide the following information:

- ❑ Techniques to reduce the risk of being victimized at home or in public.
- ❑ How to recognize suspicious activities and report them.
- ❑ Crime prevention techniques for homes and businesses.

In order for a Neighborhood Watch Group to be successful, it takes active involvement by all neighbors in the group with the assistance of the Police Department. Below is an example of the effectiveness of the Neighborhood Watch Program with a group that was created in December 2003:

| Crime Statistics - Grid 1651              |    |   |   |
|---|----|---|---|
| <u>August 1, 2003 – December 31, 2003</u> |    | <u>August 1, 2004 – December 31, 2004</u> |   |
| Residential Burg                          | 1  | Residential Burg                          | 2 |
| Auto Burglary                             | 18 | Auto Burglary                             | 4 |
| Auto Theft                                | 23 | Auto Theft                                | 5 |
| Petty Theft                               | 4  | Petty Theft                               | 3 |
| Grand Theft                               | 1  | Grand Theft                               | 0 |
| Robbery                                   | 0  | Robbery                                   | 0 |
| Vandalism                                 | 7  | Vandalism                                 | 1 |

## **B. LIGHTING**

Another tool that can reduce crime is having the right amount and type of lighting. Most crime occurs when opportunities present themselves. Dark and poorly lit locations offer the type of “opportunity” that criminals prefer. It has been the experience of the Sacramento Police Department (SPD) that the installation of additional lighting and the improvement of existing lighting, coupled with other factors, can be an effective tool in reducing crime.

With its improved technology, the SPD is better able to visualize the importance of lighting in the prevention of crime. The Department has the ability to take GIS files and map the City not only with crime information, but also with lighting densities supplied by the City’s Transportation Department. This visual information shows the potential of lighting’s ability to reduce crime.

In 2001, the SPD began a partnership with SMUD to seek their assistance in adding and improving lighting in high crime areas. SMUD dedicated an energy specialist to take nighttime tours with SPD Officers to see what assistance and expertise they could provide to help lower the occurrence of crime. As the business and community groups began to recognize the impact of improved lighting, requests for SMUD’s assistance has increased.

SMUD also recognized the need and demand for their expertise and created two positions to provide this service.

Currently, the SPD is coordinating with SMUD on no less than 50 lighting projects. The projects range from parks, to business districts, libraries, apartment complexes, churches, etc. Notable projects that are underway include Phoenix Park, Women's Civic Improvement Center, Campbell Soup, Cheers Bar, St. Roses Church, 53<sup>rd</sup> & Young Streets, and McClatchy Park.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:** N/A

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

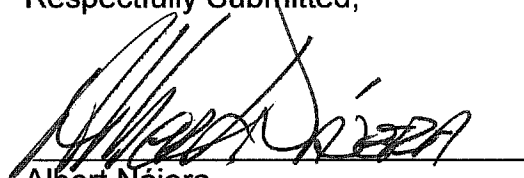
Increased lighting is considered a nuisance to some. The Dark Skies organization is lobbying nationwide for regulation of outdoor lighting levels. Title 24 of the 2005 Building Energy Efficiency Standards sets limits on outdoor lighting levels.

**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:**

This report is consistent with the City's goal to work with the entire community in order to provide a safe living environment and enhance the quality of life in the city. Additionally, this report meets one of the objectives identified by the City Council in their strategic plan.

**ESBD CONSIDERATIONS:** N/A

Respectfully Submitted,



Albert Nájera  
Chief of Police

**RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:**



Robert P. Thomas  
City Manager

AN/ss