

## **Busted: Targeted Enforcement: Lansing, MI Police February 2013**

Caution tape is an all too familiar sight for the people who live in the Old Everett area of south central Lansing. "I know in my neighborhood there have been some shootings and stabbings," said Vicki Bellon, who lives there.

"We had the Blackened Moon shooting incident," said Ron Leix, president of the Old Everett Neighborhood Association. "We had a murder at Mary and MLK, there was a murder on Kelsey. Before that, a year ago on New Year's, a person was shot at the former Point After, the former Body and Soul restaurant over off MLK. So, through this corridor, it's been highly alarming." It's not just violence.

"In our area off of Lowcroft, we had an increase in crime, breaking and enterings, larcenies," said Sam Brewster, president of Friends of Cavanaugh Park. "We have many neighbors that's lived in that area for 30, 40, 50 years since those homes have been built there and they've never experienced anything like this." The landscape has certainly changed.

"Through here we had EDS with their jobs," Leix explained. "Back in the day, this parking lot would have been full. We had Spartan Tire, we had a Pizza Hut. I mean, we had a decent place to live." Now on MLK and Holmes, you'll find some strip malls and, on the northeast corner, a concrete wasteland. When the economy took a hit, businesses closed up shop and people left their homes. That's when Leix says drug dealing became a problem.

"It seems like it is almost an epidemic in a lot of circumstances," he said. "With the housing crisis, we've seen a few drug houses pop up and lately we've seen violent crime to some extent."

Leix isn't the only concerned citizen. Once a month, people who live in the area meet to talk about pressing public safety issues. A Lansing police officer answers their questions, and they voice any concerns they may have. At the January meeting, the group discussed the last three months of the year, during which the Lansing Police Dept. started doing a new type of enforcement. So far it seems to be working.

"In fact, it's quieted down quite a bit," Brewster said. "In the last month when I ran the stats just for our four streets, we had zero incidents." Since early October, LPD has been doing targeted enforcement in an area it deemed a hot spot: MLK and Holmes.

"When we look at violent crime, with gun crime—gun violence, specifically-- the data says that this intersection, this target area, we have a lot of people coming in and out of this area that may be carrying guns, transporting guns," said Capt. Mike Yankowski of LPD. "If we can have contact with them and get those guns out of the hands of those that are using those in ways that are harming our children and our families, that is our goal."

It's a two-pronged approach: clean up the crime and reduce deadly accidents. "Between MLK and Holmes here all the way down to Jolly, we've had about five fatalities since 2007," said Yankowski. "That's one of the highest numbers in the city of Lansing during that time period."

The strategy is called Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety, or DDACTS. LPD looked at statistics for crime and accidents and found MLK and Holmes is a ground zero for those problems. Then they extended the hot zone north to Victor Ave., west to Pleasant Grove Rd., south to Jolly Rd., and east to Lowcroft Ave. and Washington Ave. Here's how it works: LPD puts more officers in the hot zone to do traffic enforcement, and police pull over drivers for everything from reckless driving to a broken tail light. They find more than you might think.

In the first three months LPD used DDACTS, officers made 580 traffic stops. They arrested 94 people, 16 of them for felonies. They stopped 45 people driving with suspended licenses, pulled over four people operating while intoxicated, and took four guns off the street. When you compare the numbers for October, November and December to the same three months in 2011, the difference is impressive.

"I think the results speak for itself," Yankowski said. "We've already seen for overall in this target area, a 34 percent drop in crime. When you compare that to the rest of the city during that time frame, the rest of the city had a 9.4 percent decrease in crime."

To break it down, according to data from LPD, burglaries are down 52 percent, aggravated assaults are down 45 percent, drug violations are down 40 percent and retail frauds dropped 31 percent. Homicides and robberies were unchanged.

"Traffic stops can lead to different things and that's kind of what this is all geared to," said Sgt. Leith Curtis of LPD, who patrols the area. "I believe we're making an impact here" in terms of crime and safety. "Within the past three months, there has been a significant drop in speed, so I think people in that area are very aware that police are paying closer attention to the speeds in that area," Curtis explained. The neighborhood is noticing.

"I would say we've seen a significant difference," Leix said. "It's been quiet. When people see a police presence, they know that we're not screwing around. The Old Everett Area is taking a zero-tolerance approach to crime and this has just become an invaluable tool. It's showing that we're not gonna tolerate the shenanigans-- the drug dealing, the crime, the shakedowns. We are fighting this head-on and the Lansing Police Dept. has been a partner in doing so and they've really stepped up to the plate."

Capt. Yankowski says LPD will continue DDACTS in the MLK and Holmes area for the next six months to a year. At that point, it will evaluate the results and determine whether to try DDACTS in other parts of the city. The department has studied certain areas in which to implement DDACTS but they are not yet set in stone.