

Minutes:
Safe Neighborhoods Network
Roundtable Meeting
Saturday, March 26, 2011
PCRG

In Attendance:

Emily Anderson, PCRG Staff
Ed Nusser, PCRG Staff
Doug McKenzie, Ph.D candidate, Kent State University
Tom Corcoran, California-Kirkbride
Darla D'Anna, Mt. Washington CDC
Sgt. Miller, Pittsburgh Police Department

Goal for meeting: Due to the low turnout, we will have an informal discussion of what is going in our neighborhoods and will hear from Sgt. Miller of the Pittsburgh Police Department.

Announcements:

- a. Safe Neighborhood Network website is up, EA asked for review.
www.safeneighborhoodsnetwork.com EA asked the group for input on resources to include or expand on.
- b. 2 PNCIS Trainings will be occurring in April. Wed. April 6th 10-11:30 AM and Thursday April 28th 10-11:30. Trainings are at 121 University Place on University of Pittsburgh's Campus.
 - i. Brief discussion of the benefits and nature of PNCIS, including usefulness of technological resources for our members.
- c. SAFE Pittsburgh Event. May 21 from 8:30-3:00 at West Penn Hospital.
 - i. Discussion of speakers. EA gave a brief summary of the event, highlighting the keynote speaker US Attorney David Hickton. EA also briefly explained the panels and Q&A's which will feature representatives from BBI, Housing Authority, Pittsburgh Police Dept., and others. Also noted that the event will include a light breakfast and boxed lunch. Website will be up at www.safepittsburgh.pittsburghpa.gov. Registrations will be taken online through the above website, event is FREE, we are asking for prior registration.
 - ii. EA stated that a goal of S.A.F.E. Pittsburgh is to identify and build PCRG public safety policy going forward by hearing what residents' thoughts and concerns are on public safety issues in the city.
 - iii. EA will be present at an April 12 Hilltop Alliance meeting to inform those groups of S.A.F.E. Pittsburgh.

Discussion: *What's Going on in Your Neighborhoods? Discussion w/Sgt. Miller*

Mt. Washington

Darla – Mentioned the increasing number of people outside as the weather improves. Also mentioned issue of mentally ill/disturbed people on the streets.

- a. Sgt. Miller took this chance to inform the group of PPD efforts and strategies for dealing with mentally ill individuals on streets who may or may not be homeless. Sgt. Miller highlighted Critical Incident Training that officers go through to deal with mentally ill/disturbed individuals.
 - i. He stressed the importance of informing the police if you witness a person of this nature.

- ii. Once they are dispatched, officers at the scene will ascertain if the individual is a threat to themselves or others. If they are deemed to be a threat, they are taken to Western Psych. This can be either a voluntary or involuntary committal.
- iii. Sgt. Miller also informed the group that 911 will never broadcast who has called in or what address the original call came from and callers have the option to tell the operator that they do not wish to speak to the police. Remaining anonymous is possible when calling 911.
- b. Sgt. Miller also spoke of the city's Crisis Line that runs the Crisis Team Interventions or CTI.
 - i. Sometimes CTI cannot/will not come to the scene. If CTI doesn't come out and person won't voluntary commit themselves, police have little options unless it can be proven that the individual is a threat to themselves or others. In this case, they can be involuntarily committed to Western Psych.
 - ii. He informed the group of the facilities run by Mercy Behavioral, but individuals must go to Mercy voluntarily.
 - iii. Sgt. Miller also informed the group that judges can order mandatory psych evaluations. Another route to getting people help and off the streets if they can get them into court.

California-Kirkbride

Tom relayed the events in California Kirkbride.

- a. Tom relayed success story of CIT intervention where CK residents were able to get an elderly neighbor into Mercy Behavioral facilities through the winter.
- b. TC – also noted the good relationships that Zone 1 PD has built with himself and others. He noted only 2 problem areas in CK
 - Drug dealing house on Kunkle. St.
 - Kirkbride Street – Individuals work on cars on the street, hoods are always up on cars, conceals activities.
- c. Streetlights repair and replacement– California Kirkbride has replaced every burned out or broken streetlight. 24 phone number to report these problems is: 412.255.5483 – Allegheny City Electric.
- d. Cleanup efforts – Tom explained that cleanup efforts have noticeably made people who don't want to conform uncomfortable, TC expects they will either adapt to improvements or leave the neighborhood.

Sgt. Miller's Discussion

- a. Reinforced need for community information.
- b. Sgt. Miller explained the silent complaint form used by Pittsburgh Police. Either city narcotics division or zone police will handle it. He also stressed that these anonymous complaints/tips do get acted on.
 - a. Link can be found on SNN site @ <http://safeneighborhoodsnetwork.com/police-and-crime-information/police-contacts-and-crime-reporting/> or City's website @ http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/police/html/police_tip_form.html or <http://communitysafety.pittsburghpa.gov/SubmitTip.aspx>
- c. Sgt. Miller Reinforced need for PD and other agency collaboration. Involve BBI on vacant properties, community groups can help with this as well.
 - a. EA – reviewed previous VPWG meeting, and discussion of how BBI investigates and determines buildings to demolish.
 - b. Sgt. Miller – reinforced the importance of work of BBI, both useful and informative. Good relationships are key to accomplishing work.

- c. Darla pointed out the need for a list of anonymous resources for people to contact police.

The Common Question “is the neighborhood safe?”

- a. Darla mentioned hearing the above question frequently – asked the group for thoughts on how to convince people neighborhoods are safe? Darla noted Beechview in particular.
 - Sgt. Miller gave his opinion on the problems created by vacant properties/storefronts in Beechview & Sect. 8 housing. He noted the conflict between Spanish speaking immigrants and the older Beechview Population
 - The group came to a general consensus that in cases such as these, community draw must be created. But any new community image has to be internally generated.
 - i. EA – if people aren’t coming there on their own, there is no reason to draw them there, old patterns of thinking remain. Need to change image.
 - ii. TC – have encountered this in CK. Need to rebuild image of neighborhood. Which requires the inside group to buy in first.
 - 1. TC noted example of the Hill and Crawford Roberts – both are new mixed income, mixed race, thriving developments. Hill is a growing neighborhood.
 - iii. EA – stabilize area first. IE – Cleanup Efforts. Community groups, Allegheny CleanWays, and the Parks System can all play a role in this. People don’t need to come to a neighborhood purely for the business district. Parks, greenspace, etc. also draw visitors.
 - iv. Darla – Education as a piece of development. Get real estate agents promoting, not discouraging, city houses. Educate realtors as well as residents.
 - v. EA – projecting neighborhood safety. Neighborhoods can look unsafe (IE people on street, presence of nuisance bars, etc) which creates an image problem.
- b. Safety Education/Awareness Issues
 - EA noted the need for general understanding of crime data and explained that this topic will be covered at the S.A.F.E. Pittsburgh event.
 - TC – Crime data distributed at zone public safety meetings can be confusing for novices.
 - EA informed the group that she will meet with CRO’s from all PD zones in hopes to get them thinking about how they deliver crime statistics and message behind them. She noted, and the group agreed, that we don’t want crime stats to make people fear their neighborhoods.
- c. Building Community/Neighborhood Feel
 - TC has had success in California Kirkbride in hosting meet and greets for his neighbors. These have been attempts to get neighbors together to talk to each other, especially those that people think they wouldn’t have things in common with.
 - Darla noted use of porches to build a community feel. Porches change the community atmosphere. Mentioned the idea of a grant program for porch rehab. Changes street façade, and puts neighbors on their street. Visibility reduces crime.

What Needs to Come From These Observations?

- a. EA noted that policy and advocacy are the goals of PCRG. SNN needs to figure out policy initiatives to tackle public safety.
 - a. Group noted that one recurring issue is Sect. 8. Can’t oversaturate neighborhoods w/ Sect. 8.

- i. Pressure on landlords to upkeep and screen tenants.
 - ii. Accountability for Sect. 8 tenants and landlords. EA explained that Fulton Meachem can speak to this at S.A.F.E. Pittsburgh
- b. Darla noted the need for landlord registration policy which is a key to holding landlords accountable. Good landlords have no need to worry about this.
- c. Group spoke of neighborhood marketing.
 - i. TC – use neighborhood history for marketing.
 - ii. Darla – mentioned role of technology in disseminating this information.
 - iii. EA – Pittsburgh City Living Website – A PCRG take over of this website is in the works but not definite.
 - 1. The site lets individuals rank neighborhood characteristics and then will give you city neighborhoods that are a good fit for you
 - 2. infrastructure exists to build and disseminate neighborhood stories

Next meeting: May 14th Meeting is cancelled due to SAFE Pittsburgh occurring the following week.

Meeting Adjourned