

## Neighbor's Neighborhood Safety Committee

Date: December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
To: Crossroads Village residents  
From: Alyson Neighbors, bachelor's in emergency management  
Gage Neighbors, Veteran of United States Army  
Subject: Proposal for making Crossroads a safer community.

### Purpose

The purpose of this proposal is to request your help as our neighbors in implementing some new ideas to make our neighborhood a safer community.

### Summary

Are you tired of having your car broken into and crooks taking away your hard-earned money and belongings? It's time as a community we stand together and stop these crimes from happening. These crooks were originally taking advantage of crimes of opportunity. Which meant they would break into those cars which were left unlocked that had purses and other valuables visible, as well as unlocked toolboxes. It's easy to see how to stop these crimes. Simply take valuable belongings into your home and make sure your vehicle and toolboxes are locked. But the crimes have escalated, and the criminals are getting bolder, now not stopping at a locked car door, the criminals are smashing in windows. It's time as a community that we put an end to it. How, you ask? I have a few ideas to share with you. I think that if we come together to form a community watch program, install streetlights, an entrance gate and enhance security all around we can significantly reduce these crimes.

### Introduction

My husband Gage and I moved into this neighborhood 3 years ago. We moved out of a lower income neighborhood in hopes of raising our daughter in a safer area. While living in the lower income area we never once had anything broken into. Since moving here, we had someone go through my husband's toolbox in his work truck on an evening that they broke into several cars. Nothing was stolen from his toolbox, but we know they got into it because it was wide open the next morning. We have security cameras around our house, and we believe that whoever was going through the toolbox noticed the cameras and took off before they stole anything. Since then, my husband has made sure to lock his toolbox. Yes, we have cameras up, but since they die frequently, they are there more for a deterrent since criminals don't know they aren't working cameras. The night our toolbox was broken into our neighbors had their car broken into and a gun was stolen. The police came to investigate and saw we had cameras and asked if we had footage of that night. Unfortunately, our cameras were dead that evening. The person that got into my husband's toolbox would have been well visualized had our cameras been working. So yes, the cameras worked as a deterrent because it stopped them from stealing from us, but if they had been working it might have gotten the person caught.

We have several other neighbors who have security cameras around their homes. When a break in takes place those who have cameras will find footage if they have any of the perpetrator or the possible vehicle and will usually post this on the community Facebook page. This allows all who are on the page to see the potential vehicle and perpetrator so that they can recognize them if they come into the neighborhood again. We have had multiple break-ins, and as far as I know no one has been charged. So, they keep coming back to our neighborhood because we are easy targets and they have gotten away with it multiple times already.

But my question is, why in such a nice new neighborhood like ours are we constantly having break ins? When you look at statistics, most high crime areas are those areas that are in disarray, have vacant lots, and have abandoned buildings but we don't have that here. Looking at a few of the issues we do have, we decided that our number one issue is the lack of lighting at night, making our cars perfect targets. We also believe that having our community open instead of gated allows more people access to our neighborhood that have no business being here. Our neighborhood is constantly growing, and this makes it harder for us as neighbors to know one another and to be able to recognize a strange car in another's driveway. If we get to know each other better, we can better look out for one another.

### Proposed Tasks

#### Task 1: Neighborhood Crime watch

According to the National Neighborhood watch website any community can create one of these groups in 5 easy steps. As neighbors we need to come together to protect our community. Through this group we will partner with local law enforcement to help reduce crime. Once we decide that we want to form one of these groups we just need to contact our local law enforcement agency and ask them to come meet with us. In these meetings we can discuss our concerns about our neighborhood safety and together can come up with plans to make our neighborhood a safer place to live. We as a community need to decide on how we will communicate. We already have a neighborhood Facebook page where people report things they have seen and heard. We could turn this into our Neighborhood Watch communication, or we could decide on another way to communicate.

Through this group we as neighbors can grow closer. We will watch others houses and property and report any suspicious things we see directly to our law enforcement partner. There isn't really any time that needs to be put into the Neighborhood Watch once it has been established. It is about being more observant to what is going on in the neighborhood and having a more active attitude. By knowing your neighbors more, you can more easily recognize strangers in the neighborhood and strange cars that do not belong. My husband and I saw a strange car at our neighbor's house that we didn't recognize, we saw a man in his early twenties get out of it and proceed to one of the trucks in the driveway. He said "Hi" to us and proceeded to look in the truck and around it. My husband who has our neighbor's phone number called him and let him know that there was a young man peering into one of their trucks. Our neighbor thanked us for letting him know, he told us they were trying to sell the truck and that was a potential buyer looking at it. It ended up being an innocent incident, but we didn't know this. What if that guy was planning to steal the truck or break into it? Our neighbors were thankful that we were observant and watching out for their belongings, and we would hope our neighbors would do the same for us. This is just one example of how a neighborhood community watch works. If we had the watch in effect and we had called our neighbor and they didn't know who the young man was or why he was at their house, we could have easily called our partner law officer and he/she would have been there

swiftly. Through this national program we can get street signs placed that state the area is under watch, which can further deter crime from occurring.

## Task 2: Streetlights

Gage and I believe that the lack of streetlights in our neighborhood is to blame for a lot of the break ins. We live out in the country and our neighborhood is very dark. Criminals do not want to be seen or caught so why not break into cars on the dark streets of the nice new neighborhood? Lighting alerts potential criminals that they may be seen which will deter them from breaking in. If we had streetlights our roads would be lit, and we believe crime will be reduced.

The article, "How Something as Small as Street Lights Can Reduce Crime," talks about an experiment that was done in New York City to prove this theory of streetlights reducing crime. In the New York City experiment they put new lighting in 40 out of 80 public housing complexes. At the end of the experiment, they determined that through the introduction of marginal lighting, nighttime crime was reduced by a third.

How do we get streetlights put into our neighborhood? Since we are technically out of the city limits the city doesn't have to install streetlights which is why we don't currently have lights throughout our neighborhood. There are 2 streetlights in our neighborhood. I have spoken to those neighbors to see how they got those streetlights installed. They contacted Entergy at 1-866-603-0192, the type of streetlight is called a Traditionaire streetlight for a residential neighborhood. It is \$100 for the installation of the light and just \$7 a month added to your electricity bill.

If at this time you don't have \$100 extra to spend and maybe can't afford another \$7 each month, then what can you do? Turn on all your outside lights at night, including your outside garage and porch lights, these may not be very bright lights, but they may just be enough to deter someone from trying to break into something of yours.

## Task 3: Make our Neighborhood a Gated community

Our next task to making our community safer is to make our entrance to our neighborhood a gated entrance. Nicole Gibbons states it well in her article when she says, "gated communities can offer sense of privacy, increased security, higher property values and enhanced community." From the Nimbio website I read the article "Requirements for Converting Your Neighborhood into a Gated Community." Through this article I learned of all the ways there were to access gated communities "4-digit pin pads, license plate readers, FOB keys, proximity cards, human guards, and now they even offer smartphone-based solutions." Personally, I feel like the smart phone solutions is one of the best ways to access the gate because this day in age we all always have our phones with us. I do think it would be nice if maybe there was a backup way to get in just in case you happen to forget your phone or if your phone died. This article also explains that these smartphone-based systems allow delivery drivers and first responders seamless access into the neighborhood.

According to the Nimbio article, the average cost to build a gate is anywhere from \$20,000-\$50,000. At first this price may seem high, but it has been proven that these gates increase the property value of each home by an average of \$30,000 (Nimbio). Currently in our neighborhood we have 114 houses, if each house contributed to the gate, it would be between \$117-\$438 for each home. When the neighborhood is complete there is expected to be a total of 300 houses in our neighborhood. If we wait to get the gate once the neighborhood is completed the cost would go down to \$67-\$166 per house. Even on the high end of this price if each house can pay \$166 to make the value of their home increase

by an average of \$30,000, I would say this would be money well spent towards making our neighborhood safer and making our homes worth even more.

#### Schedule

Beginning in the new year we will go door to door to each house and inform them of our desires to start a Neighborhood watch program. Once people hear how beneficial it is to have one of these programs in their neighborhood, and how little effort they must put into it, I believe all will get behind this program. All can participate, even those with busy schedules, young, old, even those who are homebound. Once we have implemented the neighborhood watch program, I hope that as a community we can all get to know one another better. Then by early April I hope we will have installed all streetlights or be halfway through the neighborhood. According to the land developer the whole neighborhood should be finished being built by December of next year. That gives us one year to decide what kind of gate we want, and which access we want. This will also give us the time needed to raise the money for the gate or decide if we want the homes in the neighborhood now to pay for the gate and as the new homes are built those people will make dues to the POA once its complete to make up for the price that the existing homes paid on the gate.

#### Budget

Community watch program- Free

Streetlights \$100 installment free, \$7 a month energy fee

Gate for community \$20,000-\$50,000. For the current 114 houses, if each house contributed to the gate, it would be between \$117-\$438 for each home. At the completion of the neighborhood with 300 houses the cost for a gate would be \$67-\$166 per house.

#### Experience

We are experienced in many different fields of life.

- Alyson Neighbors, I hold a bachelor's degree in emergency management. I have currently been a registered radiologic technologist for the past 6 years at HealthCare express.
- Gage Neighbors, Veteran of US Army, held leadership positions while in the service. Able to handle extremely high stress situations. Registered HVAC Technician working with Martins Commercial Services for the past 8 years.

## References

Gibbons, Nicole “How to Turn your Neighborhood into a Gated Community” *SafePassage Solutions*, 6 April 2021, <https://safepassagesolutions.com/2021/04/06/how-to-turn-your-neighborhood-into-a-gated-community/>

Herriges, Daniel “How Something as Small as Street Lights Can Reduce Crime” *StrongTowns*, 9 May 2019, <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2019/5/9/how-something-as-small-as-street-lights-can-reduce-crime>

“How to Start a Neighborhood Watch Group in 5 Easy Steps” *National Neighborhood Watch*, <https://www.nnw.org/start>

“Requirements for Converting Your Neighborhood into a Gated Community” *Nimbio*, 22 July 2021, <https://nimbio.com/requirements-for-converting-your-neighborhood-into-a-gated-community/>