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The developing web address of the Ridgeside Community Network.

1995 Security Report to Ridgeside Community

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For more information, please call them.

November 22, 1995

To Ridgeside Residents:

This report is from the Security Committee that was appointed at the last community meeting to make recommendations about addressing crime in the city of Ridgeside. Like our other neighbors in Brainerd and those on both sides of Missionary Ridge, we are experiencing more burglaries and thefts in the past recent months than ever before. This is not intended to scare you but to bring reality to the situation: we are surrounded on most sides by groups that are heavily into drugs and related activities, some involving gangs, groups that see Ridgeside as an easy target with easy access (for midnight shopping!).

The Committee enlisted the help of Dr. Roger Thompson who is the head of the Criminal Justice Department at UTC. Dr. Thompson has consulted extensively in the field of crime deterrents and has worked successfully with housing projects. He was not surprised to hear from us, as he has heard also from McCallie School, Parkridge Hospital, and other businesses in this area. He agreed to provide for us--at no fee--his recommendations for the City of Ridgeside. He approached the

situation by riding around with Burt one evening after dark to see us as we are seen by outsiders, He then returned in daylight to view the city in that light as well,

His report is attached for your information. The Security Committee wholeheartedly endorses the recommendations of Dr. Thompson. The recommendations follow closely those the Committee discussed prior to Dr. Thompson's report, so the Committee feels like his report is a confirmation that we are addressing the problem in the right way. Dr. Thompson says that there are several things that this community can do to make us more unattractive to crime. And that's what we want. His recommendations have been tried and proven successful in other communities.

We don't think that you will be surprised at the attached solutions, and we hope that you will concur with us as to the seriousness of the situation. We are all striving for what is best for this community and we want to maintain the great community that we have. We can no longer turn our heads and act like this is not happening to us, as it is happening to the City of Chattanooga as a whole. Our physical location gives us no choice but to address this problem as quickly as possible, for all our sake. A large part of the process will be education for us as neighbors on how not to invite crime to our homes, garages, and cars. As the holidays approach, we will be even more vulnerable due to the season.

Please carefully consider the attached pages and come to the next two meetings of our community, the first on November 29, 1995 the Vision Meeting, and the next community meeting on January 16, 1996.

CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN RIDGESIDE

BY

DR. ROGER D. THOMPSON

This report involves daylight and evening visits to Ridgeside

for the purpose of defining and developing a community self-defense to crime. Observations and perceptions contained herein may be incomplete given my brief exposure to neighborhoods; however, my recommendations are based upon solid principles and practices that discourage criminal behavior. Special words of appreciation are expressed to Chief Gould and Janet Jobe for providing insights necessary for interpretation and analyses.. I hope that these thoughts will start a discussion among neighbors that will lead in positive directions.

Ridgeside is unique insofar that it stands as a small independent political jurisdiction within the heart of Chattanooga city limits. Primary borders are Shallowford and Tunnel boulevards on the side of Missionary Ridge. It is entirely a residential single-family owner occupied community with pleasant surroundings and neighborhood recreational facilities. While the positive features of this area appear to be strong in many respects, attention here will focus primarily on some negatives and weaknesses that are in need of improvement:

LOCATION: Ridgeside is located in the inner city of Chattanooga. Quite honestly, the Ridgeside community is surrounded by areas having serious crime problems thereby inviting some crime simply because of its location. Inherently there is a high risk of vulnerability and victimization due to influences that are nearby. Tunnel Boulevard is known as a hot spot for serious drug related activities. Ridgeside is but stones throw away from irrefutable hangouts and apartment dwellings.

At the bottom of the ridge within the Gienwood area are problems of a similar nature. What must be recognized at the outset are the deleterious and damaging effects of drugs on neighborhoods. Individuals doing drugs may act out in very violent and unpredictable ways and those needing money only need to cross the street to do their shopping!

What then can be done to counter the criminal element? The recommendations that follow are presented in rank order of priority. They work together and cannot easily be separated: –

SIGNAGE

Identity is important and should be promoted. Signage denotes a sense of unity and collective effort toward maintaining certain standards within the community. I am disturbed at the lack of signs announcing Ridgeside.

To the casual observer there is little or no distinction drawn between Chattanooga and Ridgeside. In fact, absent clear announcement to the contrary, conclusion would support your being one of Chattanooga's many neighborhoods. If surrounding neighborhoods are weak and fall under Chattanooga jurisdiction then similar attitudes would prevail toward Ridgeside. My point very simply is that you need to announce who you are so that people know that they are entering a community where residents care.

Signage not only helps establish identity, signs also helps convey expectations about behavior. The absence of signs allows the visitor to proceed according to their wishes. One of the basic tenets to remember is that **CONFUSION BREEDS HOST= INVITES MISCHIEF AND PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR EXCUSE.**

From a crime prevention standpoint you must make every effort to eliminate confusion that surrounds your property.

In practice this would mean:

- 1) Major entrance gates and signs announcing Ridgeside.
- 2) Signs throughout announcing neighborhood watch, street parking, speed, etc.
- 3) Vehicle identification stickers for residents.

ENTRANCES AND EXITS

There are several roads for entry into Ridgeside. I count six which do not include alleys or service roads that can be used by the more experienced traveler. Several issues can be identified given traffic design:

1) Two streets–Ridgeside and Windermere– go straight through the community and serve as thoroughfares between Shallowford and Tunnel boulevards. This can be problematic if nonresidents use these roads as a short cut to theft final destination. My guess is that some do!

2) Limited access to the community along with signage would strengthen your stance and reduce the opportunities for mischief. Right now a stranger can come and go in too many directions without question.

3) Restricted access registers a psychological message of risk to the person entering the property of identification.

This element in and of itself would cause some midnight visitors to shop elsewhere.

Specific recommendations call for one entrance/exit from each main artery. Other roads could be blocked with large concrete flowerpots that could be moved if circumstances required. Likewise, this approach (large planters) enables some experimentation without doing something that becomes irreversible.

A. Block Seminole at the boundary line and ask the city to post "Dead End" signs as fair notice to users.

B. Block both sides of Ridgeside. Post a sign where entrance can be gained.

C. Use Hillsdale as main entrance off of Shallowford. Accent with signage.

D. Block Windmere entrance on Shallowford.

F. Use Windmere as main entrance off of Tunnel Blvd. Accent with signage.

F. Block Lyncrest entrance.

G. Post alleys as Private Driveways if possible to discourage heavy traffic.

No doubt this may seem severe but one of your natural strengths Involves service only to those who have legitimate need. You will notice that I do not mention a guard gate at either main entrance. Quite honestly, I think these changes will work effectively to discourage unwanted pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

LIGHTING

One of the obvious needs is improved lighting. Criminals love the darkness and present conditions are woefully inadequate. Be assured that I do not want to floodlight your property but there is a balance between darkness and light that serves a useful purpose.

This is an issue I would study in concert with some experts since this decision can apply to the individual homeowner or to the community in a collective sense. From my travels I am aware of a mercury vapor light that is marketed now for yard poles which does a pretty good job of lighting up an area without being too bright or troublesome. Another possibility is a waist level pole light similar to that found marking the sidewalk at the airport.

Whatever decision is reached it needs to be a community effort, not just a few individuals doing their part.

SECURITY/PATROL

Changes in access will not reduce the need for a visible

presence of law enforcement. Without reservation I would support increasing the hours with priority given to 10 p.m.–2 a.m. seven days a week. Other times could vary but it is important that a police presence be noticed because thieves will strike at will if they know that the community is without police power.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

Rowe road presents a challenge insofar that it falls within the jurisdiction of Chattanooga but is accessible only through Ridgeside. Initially I would block this road at the fire hydrant so that vehicle traffic and mischief in this area is discouraged. Discussion with city planners could help identify options.

Crescent Park is another area in need of special attention since it needs to identify with Ridgeside. My feeling is that an attractive type of perimeter fencing be used on this property so that entry and exit is by the semi-circle drive. Again lighting is an issue affecting this neighborhood.

Neighborhood Watch is a program that must be implemented if not already in place. When neighbors help each other and share information the dynamics change. Criminals prefer strangers and loose connections where people do not talk among themselves. Once word gets out that this community talks about activity criminals will begin looking for other neighborhoods that have weak network.

In summary, Ridgeside has several clear and identifiable problems meaning some serious work needs to be done to counter unhealthy influences at play. My thoughts hopefully are helpful in getting a discussion started.

It is evident to the Committee that immediate action needs to be taken in order to maintain the safety and security of Ridgeside. At the second meeting of the Security Committee on November 15, 1995, the Ridgeside Commissioners agreed to

increase Burt's hours as a first step to greater security in Rldgeside. At the community meeting on January 16, 1997, will be a discussion of the Security Committee and Dr. Thompson's proposals. The meeting will be held at Betty Cooper's, 111 Windmere.

In the meantime, our neighborhood policeman and caretaker, Burt, strongly recommends that each resident take the following precautions to reduce the occurrence of crime:

1. Display "R" stickers on cars. A visitor card should be displayed in the window of cars of services, construction workers, domestic help, and overnight guests.
2. Neighborhood watch. Be observant of who is on the street or at your neighbor's house. Call in all suspicious activity.
3. Don't park on the street. Your driveway or garage is more secure spot. Always lock your car.
4. Keep house doors locked when outside working in your yard. Be careful to whom you open your door.
5. Check out carefully those whom you hire to work in your home.
6. Consider purchase of an alarm system if you don't yet have one. Use it when you are gone and at night when you are asleep. Post your home (and vehicle) with notices of an alarm system (even if it is not so).
7. Don't leave things in your vehicle in plain view (phones, gifts, etc.), even if it is locked.
8. Don't leave items outside where they can become targets for theft: lawn mowers, unlocked bicycles, etc.
9. Make sure you report all incidents to officers, regardless how slight they may seem, so we can detect patterns of criminal activity.

10. If you are going to be away, please call Burt and your neighbors to let them know so they can watch your home. Stop papers and have mail taken in by a neighbor.

11. List serial numbers and make of products in your home. Include your car's license and vehicle registration numbers. These will come in handy if your car is stolen.