

## How to make your neighborhood safer through community, good police relations and protecting your home.

### Communicate. Get Involved. Be Aware.

A safer community is up to YOU and YOUR neighbors. The local police can and will help, but an active, concerned neighborhood can be their eyes and ears on your street. Creating a “neighborhood,” where a sense of community is felt, is very much appreciated by the local police, and deters crime.

While no action is a guarantee to preventing crime, we offer these thoughts that might help.

- **Apply the broken window theory to your street/neighborhood.** If anything looks inviting to a criminal element, like an abandoned property, they will be attracted to that area. A well-kept neighborhood will provide fewer places for suspicious persons to be attracted. So, work together as neighbors to keep your street well kept.
  - Make sure you all keep an eye out for “broken windows.”
  - Pick up trash.
  - Keep your yard tidy.
  - Remove eye sores.
  - Drive around the block. Know what and who belongs and what and who doesn’t.
- **Know your neighbors!** This is cannot be emphasized enough. If you know them, and they know you, you both will know when someone does not belong. The best way to get to know your neighbors is to spend time with them.
  - Talk to your neighbors. Know their cars. Know their habits/routines.
  - Plan seasonal get-togethers.
  - If new neighbors move in, welcome them.
  - Walk around the block. Say hi.
  - Sit on your front porch.  
See more under “get involved” later in this writing.
- **Stay in touch with your neighbors.**
  - Start a Block Watch.
    - First, have a neighborhood meeting and get people on board.
    - Contact your local police liaison; have he/she come to your meeting to speak to how a block watch works and how to set one up.
    - Official Block Watch Signage lets suspects know the whole neighborhood is watching and lets kids know where there is a safe house if they need of help.
      - Have the block watch captain put up block watch signs.
      - Have each house put up a block watch window cling.
    - Appoint a block watch captain. As the captain the police will pay more attention to things reported through your captain.
    - Take a safety walk through your neighborhood with your local police liaison.
  - Create a means of reaching your neighbors through

- A phone tree for critical situations
  - Email for items with lots of detail
  - This will be a back-up to your neighborhood closed social website (see below)
  - Distribute the numbers/emails so the tree can begin to flourish.
  - Distribute emergency numbers for city services
- **Use Social Media**
  - A private, closed Facebook page is one to the best ways to stay in touch with your immediate neighbors.
    - Make sure it is a closed/private page; you DO NOT want to share information with anyone you do not know
    - Let your neighbors know if something out of the ordinary is happening in the neighborhood.
    - Let them know when you are out of town so they can keep an eye on your home.
    - Use this forum to ask questions.
    - Plan get-togethers here.
    - To let them know your trash pickup has been delayed.
  - Consider using the Nextdoor.com website
    - The City of Cincinnati uses the site to make public announcements.
    - You can use it to see what is happening in and the concerns of a larger area of the neighborhood and get invitations to neighborhood events.
  - Use the City's online system or mobile app to register problems in the neighborhood and request services (does not include police calls)

<http://cagismaps.hamilton-co.org/csr/cincinnati/> (revised 10/15/14)

Note: there is a link of this page to download a mobile app. Here is how to install and use it <https://www.dropbox.com/s/6apnkihr73cqi/How%20to%20use%20City%20Hall%20APP.pdf?dl=0>

Issues you can report to the city and track include:

    - tall grass and weeds
    - litter
    - abandoned cars
    - pot holes; street condition
    - building code violations
    - just about any other service needed (except police matters) to keep the neighborhood in good working order.
- **Report suspicious activity to the police and / or Crimestoppers.**
  - While an officer may not respond immediately, they will make a note of it in their logs, which in turn will alert the police to any "hot spot areas." If your neighborhood is a hot spot, then you will see more police patrols, which in turn deters the criminal element.
  - Use these methods to report crime
    - In emergencies only call 911
    - The Non-Emergency dispatch number is 513-765-1212
    - <http://crime-stoppers.us/submit-a-tip/>
  - Report any suspicious activity, such as:

- cars/trucks/vehicles out of place
  - people walking randomly down your street, checking out properties, taking pictures of your houses
  - anyone who comes to your door then reports that they have “the wrong house”. This is often a ploy to see who is at home. They could easily go 2 doors away and burgle your neighbor’s house...keep an eye on them until they leave the street; report a license number if you can.
  - suspected drug deals/activity – a stranger sitting in a car on your street is a likely suspect (see more in “get involved”)
  - a business running out of a home
  - especially report ANY theft of property from your home/garage/shed/yard
- **Make YOUR home safer.** Securing your home is all about convincing criminals to go elsewhere because your home is TOO MUCH TROUBLE TO BREAK INTO AND SOMEONE MIGHT BE HOME
- Create the illusion that several people are at home:
    - The more lights around your property the less a potential criminal will want to bother the house.
      - Consider a timer for outdoor lights rather than motion detectors. It is easier for a neighbor to report a light out that is nearly always on than one that might go on when a squirrel runs by.
      - Inside the house in several areas use plug in timers on lamps. Make sure to spend a few extra dollars to secure timers that allow for a differing schedules within a week.
    - Have your TV’s and / or radios playing when out.
      - Most modern TVs have internal timers and can turn themselves on and off. Set them.
      - Consider using a plug in timer for one or more radios.
    - When on vacation, besides stopping the mail and newspaper delivery, arrange to have the snow shoveled, the leaves raked, door knockers taken off your home, garbage and/or recycling put at the curb and taken in again (a neighbor can split their garbage and recycling with your cans).
  - Anything with easy access or that is easy to sell is an invitation to a criminal.
    - Get an alarm & get a dog – dogs are the biggest deterrent of crime.
      - Announce the alarm with a metal sign on your lawn and alarm decals on your windows
      - Similarly, use a beware of dog sign
    - Trim back any bushes or trees that create hiding areas along your house where potential criminals can lurk.
    - LOCK everything: doors, windows , car, garage, storage shed
      - Doors:
        - Consult with a quality locksmith and have him/her install (or replace) a deadbolt with a 1-inch throw and a case-hardened bolt. The locksmith may try to sell you on a high-security cylinder which are more expensive but have advantages:
          1. pick-resistance (the least important)

2. drill resistance (medium-importance), and
3. key control (very important).

The special keys cannot be duplicated on a common hardware-store key-making machine. Honest locksmiths will not duplicate the keys unless shown proper identification or authorization.

Some keys cannot be duplicated at all and must be ordered specially from the factory. This is a pain but worth it if you must leave a key for a maid or service worker from time to time.

Never leave your key in the deadbolt in your home. If broken into, criminals will take that key on the way out.

To be effective it is suggested that installation of the deadbolt must have a reinforced strike with four 3-inch screws into the actual house framing (not just the door trim).

If you have decorative side glass on the door frame, consider having a 14 inch thick flat steel bar imbedded in the door jamb, bolted to the top and bottom structural framing. This will cost several hundred dollars but is the only way to properly secure a door with a thin frame next to glass. Decorative sidelight panels or a glass panel in the door can be replaced with shatter-resistant safety glass or Lexan or have your glazier screw a cut piece of Lexan on the inside of the door, backing up the original glass.

Sliding glass doors are burglar favorites. Consider installing a Fortress Lock or Charley Bar instead of using a broomstick to hold the door shut.

- **Garage door:**

Keep garage doors closed at all times, even when in the yard or at home.

Consider having a locksmith install a deadbolt on your garage door, or get a special padlock you can use when away for extended periods.

Garage doors should have solid wood or solid core construction.

Your garage door remote control should be of the "rolling code" variety. If your control is more than about 15 years old, it's probably not. "Code sniffers" are commonly available. With one, a thief can lie in wait, and then capture your code when you press the remote. Later, he can use his own remote to open your garage door, close it behind him, and go to work in complete privacy.

DO NOT leave your garage door opener in the car. That could be stolen one night, you rush off to work wondering where it is, and come home to a burgled home.

- **Windows:** when the locksmith is changing out your deadbolts, ask about extra window locks.

- Keep a baby monitor in areas of your home or property that are remote for instance, the storage shed, garage or basement.
- Mark your valuables with an engraver. At the least they will be identifiable if stolen. It also makes them more difficult to sell.

- *Bad places* to hide things i.e. the first place a burglar will look:
        - Anywhere in the master bedroom, living room, or dining room  
Consider putting decoy jewelry in a jewelry box in the master bedroom and having two safes, the real and very well hidden one, and a decoy with official looking papers that are valueless.  
Criminals will be in and out in about 8 minutes so they might grab that and not look further.
        - Dresser or lingerie drawers
        - Night stands
        - Under the mattress
        - Medicine cabinets – especially your prescription medicines which will be a target.
      - *Good places* to hide things:
        - Attic
        - Basement
        - Children's' bedrooms
        - Broom closet
        - Kitchen
  - Know who you invite into your home, and be jealous of any information shared.
    - Call references, or better yet, know the referrer for repair people before making appointments. NOTE: call, DO NOT trust online references
    - These people may not be burglars themselves, but sources of information for other criminals
      - DO NOT mention work schedules, vacation plans, etc.
      - Be especially suspicious of telemarketers or door-to-door salespeople.  
They may appear polite by asking, "When would be a more convenient time to speak with you?" However, they're actually more interested in determining when you are not going to be home.
    - Never leave notes on your door saying when you'll be back.
    - No open parties for your teenagers, ever.
  - Protect yourself if burgled.
    - Burglars do not always leave an obvious sign that they've been there
    - DO NOT assume that something amiss was caused by another family member; check your home as soon as you see a problem like an open window
    - Leave the house if it was broken into and you are not sure if the person is gone; then call the police.
- **Homeowner's and/or Renter's Insurance:** Make sure your home owner and renter (yes, you need it) insurance is up to date and set up to protect you
- DO NOT expect to get more than \$200 in cash reimbursed by your homeowners' policy. This is the standard policy limit and cannot be increased. Also, NO gift cards are reimbursable. Put cash and gift cards in the real, well hidden safe.
  - DO NOT make the mistake of thinking that because it was inexpensive when it was purchased that it will still be inexpensive 10, 20 or 30 years later.

- DO count and inventory (written description; photos; video) all of your costume and fine jewelry.
  - DO adjust your insurance coverage to reflect the total value of your items and the individual value of particularly valuable pieces (like anniversary rings, real pearls, real or semi-precious stones, real gold, and sterling silver). The money won't replace your actual items but will be closer to the actual value that was stolen
  - A video inventory / walk through of your home with a voiceover identifying items of value will be very helpful if you ever have to make a claim.
  - Keep your inventories in a safe place away from your home such as a safety deposit box.
- **Get Involved.** The more neighbors are working together as a form of community, the less the criminals want to hang around.
- Go to local meetings.  
There are several contacts for local organizations that could use your services on this site. Volunteer
  - Solicit local shops.
  - Walk your neighborhood.
    - Take the dog, or your spouse out for a walk regularly; it will be better for you, the dog, your spouse and your neighborhood compared to sitting at home or having the dog just run the yard.
    - If you see a strangers walking down the street or sitting in an unknown car on your street, that is the time to walk the dog. Note: DO NOT risk anything that you are not comfortable with, as strangers sitting in cars could be a drug deal about to happen
    - Introduce yourself, making the observation that you have never seen them before, ask who they are and if you can help them with anything, ask them if they need assistance, you would be happy to call the police to come by and help if it is needed
    - Be friendly and creative in the items you chose to talk about. If you mention a few things about the nosy neighbors, or the large, unfriendly dog on the loose at this moment they might catch on that it might behoove them to move on
  - If you see a drug deal happening, or are very suspicious of an individual at your door or walking the street take pictures. There is a spot on the Crime Stoppers page to submit them.
  - Help with clean ups
  - Attend local events
  - Stop by the library
  - Attend a local church

This is a compilation of information from your Westwood neighbors in cooperation with the Westwood Civic Association. If you have suggestions to add, please contact the Westwood Civic Association.