

Twelve Ways to Improve Your Neighborhood *Right Now*

Adapted from training materials for:

Community Involvement Training: A course in community renewal
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The following list is intended to introduce the neighbor who has never participated in a crime prevention effort to simple steps that can be taken now to make a difference.

1. Report crime promptly. Neighbors sometimes don't report criminal activity because they don't want to bother the police, they assume police are too short-staffed to respond, or they believe that there isn't much an officer can (or will) do about a given problem anyway. Whether the issue is graffiti, petty vandalism, or something much more serious, police cannot act without first hearing about the problem from you. Calling won't guarantee that police can fix the problem, but failing to call can guarantee that they won't. Also, don't assume someone else has called. Make the call yourself.

2. Report nuisances and other non-criminal problems promptly. Examples: Junked cars on front lawns, abandoned autos in the streets, old mattresses left to rot in a backyard, garbage dumped illegally in a vacant lot. When you find yourself thinking, "someone ought to *do something*," *do something*. Call code enforcement, non-emergency numbers, landlords, residents, local business owners, or any other person or agency that may have influence on the issue. Then call your neighbors and ask those who are also concerned about the issue to call and report as well. Then keep calling until the issue is resolved.

3. Take away the opportunity for crime. Think about your home, your car, and even your lifestyle and ask what you could change to take away the opportunity for crime. Lock your car and never leave valuables, even for a few minutes, in the car where would-be thieves might see them. Trim bushes or trees on your property that offer too-convenient hiding places. Also trim where trees and

bushes block a clear view of your front door and address from the street or make it difficult for a person to see out of windows in your home. In short, make your front porch visible and make sure your home looks like it has its "eyes" (windows) open.

4. Make a list of the names and phone numbers of every neighbor on your block. Not just two neighbors — set a goal of at least 10 and preferably 20 or 30. Find almost any citizen who has turned around a problem block and you will find a citizen who knows the people who live there and greets them by name. Did you grow up in a neighborhood where "everyone knew each other" and find that today your neighborhood isn't like that? That's true for many people. That's not "society's" fault. Instead, think of it as your own fault and you can fix it. Unless you know neighbors' names and numbers, you can't call them about a concern or let them know about a neighborhood problem. Learn the names and phone numbers of your neighbors this weekend.

5. Meet the youth who live on your block and greet them by name. This is one of the simplest steps an adult can take, yet it can make a profound difference should there be a future need for adults and young people to speak to each other in the midst of a neighborhood crisis. It is difficult to form a safe and supportive community without the adults and youth knowing each other's names. Even those without children should know to whom the various children in the neighborhood belong. In this way, each adult is better able to help in an emergency and is better prepared to discuss problems immediately as they arise.

6. Make a list of landlords in your area as well. As owners of property in the community, landlords are responsible to the neighborhood