

Reap your Reader Rewards

NOW OPEN New Parks. New Model Homes. Pflugerville living from the \$170,000s
FALCON POINTE
Newland by COMMUNITIES

Home > Local News

Neighbors, police team up for big crime drops in South Austin

Increased patrols by police and citizens have led to fewer burglaries, assaults.



Ralph Barrera/ AMERICAN-STATESMAN

By Patrick George
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Updated: 11:56 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 27, 2011
Published: 9:34 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 27, 2011

E-mail | Print | Share | Larger Type

ENLARGE PHOTO

John Luther, in car, and, from left, Sally Buchner, Marcia McClellan, Judy Wilkins and David Donaldson volunteer with the crime patrol program in their Barton Hills neighborhood.



ENLARGE PHOTO

LATEST LOCAL NEWS »

- Austin eyes West Texas for solar power 11:51 p.m. Sunday
- Plan to keep traffic flowing on Loop 360 isn't popular among some who live along the westside artery Updated 5:17 a.m.
- Community Briefing: Joe Gracey memorial date set; man dies in Hays wreck 10:40 p.m. Sunday
- Award-winning Eastside robotics team worried about charter school proposal 11:20 p.m. Sunday
- Mayor's district plan for City Council getting little support on committee 9:41 p.m. Sunday

Latest local news and last 7 days of headlines

MORE ON STATESMAN.COM »

By the time their homes and vehicles were being burglarized two to four times a week, the residents of the Barton Hills neighborhood had had enough.

So about three years ago, the South Austinites started taking matters into their own hands. Members of the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association organized a neighborhood watch program that would be more engaged than most.

Residents began driving around the neighborhood during peak burglary hours — mid-morning until mid-afternoon — with magnetic signs on their cars that said "Patrol." If they saw something, they called 911, said John Luther, a retired state employee and organizer of the watch patrol.

"We decided we were going to be more proactive in dealing with crime in this neighborhood," Luther said.

The neighborhood runs south of Riverside Drive between the Barton Creek greenbelt and Lamar Boulevard.

Now, efforts by neighbors and police have led to a huge drop in crime in that neighborhood, especially in the past year, according to police statistics.

They've seen a decline in neighborhood crime since the watch started, but "this year, it's been phenomenal," Luther said.

Barton Hills isn't alone. Police officials in South Austin said that over the past year, they've also focused heavily on burglaries of homes and vehicles, increasing patrols and getting neighbors involved in preventing crime.

"From day one, we started putting more officers where the hot spots were," said police Cmdr. Ernest Pedraza, who oversees South and Southwest Austin, also known as Austin Police Region 4.

Pedraza said these hot spots included several neighborhoods, as well as Barton Creek Mall, Southpark Meadows shopping center and other retailers along the Interstate 35 corridor.

The result: Police Department statistics show that South and Southwest Austin combined have seen a 14 percent drop in violent crime and a 16 percent drop in property crime from Jan. 1 to mid-November when compared with the same period in 2010.

There has been a 28 percent drop in sexual assaults, from 50 to 36;

SEARCH
Site Web Archive Web Search by YAHOO!

Limited-edition Coke glasses are back at McDonald's.
GET ONE FREE with the purchase of a large Extra Value Meal.*
Learn more >
At participating McDonald's. Limited time offer. While supplies last. Price of required purchase posted on menu board. © 2011 McDonald's.

SHARE THIS PAGE WITH YOUR FRIENDS

2 3 0 0
Tweet Share +1 Digg

LATEST NEWS GALLERIES »

- Photos of the Day, November 2011
- Eastside Memorial High School robotics, 11.28
- Coats for Kids, 11.28.11

MOST POPULAR

- Baylor QB Griffin says he'll play against Texas
- Nine things and one crazy prediction
- Plan to keep traffic flowing on Loop 360 isn't popular among some who live along the westside artery
- Austin airport 3rd-best in North America, 5th in world
- Community Briefing: Joe Gracey memorial date set; man dies in Hays wreck
- Neighbors, police team up for big crime drops in South Austin

LATEST AP TEXAS NEWS »

- Perry making Houston stop for new cancer center Updated 9:34 a.m.
- Icahn launches offer for Commercial Metals 9:06 a.m.
- Guard dead in Houston-area game room shooting 8:56 a.m.
- AP NEWS: Texas | Nation | World | Sports | Biz

- ▶ [Austin eyes West Texas for solar power](#)
- ▶ [Plan to keep traffic flowing on Loop 360 isn't popular among some who live along the westside artery](#)
- ▶ [Alabama beats Virginia Commonwealth 72-64](#)
- ▶ [Women's basketball: California upsets Virginia](#)
- ▶ [Bowl Championship Series standings](#)
- ▶ [Baylor QB Griffin says he'll play against Texas](#)
- ▶ [Alabama ready to play the BCS waiting game](#)

More

Commenting unavailable on some articles

As part of a technology change, commenting will not be available on some articles for a number of months. [Read more about the change here.](#)

a 27 percent drop in robberies of businesses, from 51 to 37; a 32 percent drop in nonresidential burglaries, from 524 to 358; and a 23 percent drop in residential burglaries, from 1,800 to 1,382.

The only crime that has increased between last year and now is homicides. Between Jan. 1 and mid-November 2010, the region had five homicides. During the same time period this year, there were 11 homicides. Seven of them have been solved.

Pedraza said officers have increased the number of patrol cars and bicycle cops in neighborhoods and have done more sting operations and undercover work since last year.

They have also targeted motels along I-35 where drugs are sold and patrons engage in prostitution.

"We saw a continual drop throughout the year in burglary and property crimes," he said.

Pedraza also praised the work of the neighborhood watch in Barton Hills, parts of which have seen as much as an 80 percent drop in property crimes, he said.

"We're really appreciative of how they've made Barton Hills a safer neighborhood," said Craig Smith, the neighborhood association's president.

Luther, of the neighborhood association, said their system recently won an award from the Central Texas Crime Prevention Association.

Usually, volunteers drive around for an hour a week, but some do more. They have about 30 people involved at the moment, he said.

If the patrol members spot a crime or something suspicious, they don't interfere or get out of their cars, Luther said. They just call police and wait for officers to arrive.

"We find we get an excellent response, easily within five minutes," Luther said. He said it's pretty rare for patrol members to encounter a crime in progress.

"They see us more than we see them," and that keeps crime away, he said.

Smith said they've also organized events where neighbors get to know one another and make lists of who is on their block, so they can contact one another in case something happens.

Luther said the neighborhood association has also been exporting their methods to other areas of the city, such as Zilker Park and Travis Heights.

"Citizens don't just have to be victims," Luther said.

pgeorge@statesman.com; 445-3548

Share this article:



User comments are not being accepted on this article.

FROM OUR NEWS PARTNERS

- ▶ [Rapper T.I. says gays 'too sensitive'](#)
- ▶ [Fla. teen finds out what can happen when private photos go public on porn site](#)
- ▶ [What will it cost you when payroll tax cuts expire?](#)
- ▶ [Full deposition to be filed in civil suit against Casey Anthony](#)
- ▶ [Fla. teacher returns after firing for allegedly yelling, cursing at student](#)
- ▶ [Inmate escapes deputies after examination at hospital](#)
- ▶ [Neighbors call a pair of house fires suspicious](#)
- ▶ [Body found in mall identified as missing man who answered Craigslist ad](#)
- ▶ [Woman warns of scam to bury 2-year-old child](#)
- ▶ [Police: Robbers rip cameras out after holding up hotel](#)

Austin Apartments

\$200 Rent Specials, Austin Apartments. ASAP Move-In.
www.allaustin.com

Texas Longhorns Apparel

University of Texas Apparel - Shop Exclusive Cyber Monday
www.eLonghorn.com

UT Longhorns Jerseys Shop

Buy Texas Longhorns Jerseys Now. Huge Selection of Texas
ShopNCAASports.com

Ads by Yahoo!

NEWS

[Local](#)
[Virtual Capitol](#)
[Williamson](#)
[State](#)
[Crimetracker](#)
[StatesmanWatch](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Database Central](#)
[Nation](#)

SPORTS

[Longhorns](#)
[Longhorns Gameweek](#)
[Aggies](#)
[HS Football](#)
[High School](#)
[Recruiting](#)
[Outdoors](#)
[Golf](#)
[Area Pro Teams](#)

WEATHER

[TRAFFIC](#)
[Traffic Cameras](#)
[MULTIMEDIA](#)
[Collective Vision](#)
[Interactives](#)
[Galleries](#)
[BLOGS](#)
[ENTERTAINMENT](#)
[A-List](#)

CLASSIFIEDS

[Cars](#)
[Homes](#)
[Jobs](#)
[Find Austin Jobs](#)
[Merchandise](#)
[CUSTOMER SERVICE](#)
[Member Center](#)
[E-mail Newsletters](#)
[Subscribe to the paper](#)

ADVERTISE

[Print](#)
[Online](#)
[Classifieds \(Print & Online\)](#)
[eTearsheets](#)
[Newspaper Ads](#)
[MARKETING](#)
[Community Development](#)
[DoGood](#)
[Glossy](#)