

The Corner Forum

for the 1200 and 1300 blocks of E, the 400 and 500 blocks of 13th,
Duncan Place and Emerald Street NE

Issue #39
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<http://www.thecornerforum.org>

Police Need Probable Cause, to Act

Marc Borbely (536 13th St. NE) and Sharon Cochran (1300 block of Emerald Street NE) spoke to Officer Lawrence last Saturday, while he was manning a police mini-station at 13th and D Streets NE. They invited him to introduce himself and to talk about the purpose of the mini-station.

I'm Nick Lawrence. This is a Metropolitan Police Department open-air mini-station, providing increased visibility to the community, in particular to this PSA, which is PSA 511.

How long does a mini-station last?

At the discretion of the chief of police. It moves from location to location. We've been here about three times in the last thirty days. We're able to answer residents' questions without them having to call. Oftentimes, they want information — and they don't necessarily need immediate police service.

[Sharon: Are you here because there are lots of complaints from around here?]

No. Most of the complaints in this block and in the next block are litter and drinking in public.

Sharon: So you haven't had any complaints about drug dealing?

Well, that's a very fluid activity, and if people see one or two or more persons hanging — for lack of a better term — oftentimes, especially persons new to the neighborhood, assume that they're selling drugs.

If we could actually just walk up to anyone, search them — it's unconstitutional. So we have to have probable cause

before we can make an arrest, for actually selling drugs.

What would probable cause be, in a case like that?

Well, probable cause is facts or circumstances that would suggest — there are laws on the books that the Council has put into place.

However, this neighborhood is rapidly gentrifying. Like, he's [Officer



Officer Nick Lawrence

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Inclusionary Zoning Needed in D.C.

BY MARY SPENCER, 1349 EMERALD ST. NE

The Advisory Neighborhood Commission's Economic Development and Zoning Committee invited the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) to its meeting in June to make a presentation regarding the issue of Inclusionary Zoning (IZ).

I have been a member of ACORN for the past two years, and I had the distinct pleasure of speaking to those present regarding a mandatory Inclusionary Zoning policy — a policy that we feel will best serve the existing moderate- and low-income residents here in the District of Columbia.

First, IZ is a technique used to create diverse mixed-income communities. In its basic form, it requires that each new housing development make a certain percentage of units affordable to a specific income range.

The District of Columbia is advocating a voluntary Inclusionary Zoning policy, which we feel will not work well because it sets up an uneven playing field, where one developer may get one deal and another developer gets another deal.

Developers will not opt into a voluntary program unless the incentives are huge. In other words, we will have to give away the farm to get them to go along with this program. Information provided through numerous studies shows that voluntary IZ does not work.

ACORN's membership is comprised of the working community and realizes that in order for those residents now residing in the D.C. area to continue having affordable housing, there must be some policy that will enforce how the new developments are priced, so that we are not priced out of our communities.

ACORN is pushing for a mandatory IZ policy that assists those within the 30 percent range of the Area Median Income (AMI) range, which is \$84,800 for the Greater Washington region. This means we are looking to assist current residents who have incomes of \$26,100 or less, for a family of four. Such families will not be able to afford housing in the D.C. area without an IZ policy.

ACORN is now working with other organizations to develop a mandatory IZ policy that will demand that developers include affordable units when developing new units or when rehabilitating existing units.



Mary
Spencer

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Lawrence points to Stephen Smith] been in the neighborhood for years, but we have an influx of young professionals, moneyed professionals, or people who may not even be professionals but had enough money to move into the neighborhood. And so right now, it's in transition.

Persons who grew up in a nonurban setting and are not used to seeing young black males — they automatically assume, because many of the images they see on television — all young black males sell drugs. That's not necessarily true.

This guy [Mr. Smith] has been valuable to us. He comes around and he talks with us. He's a young black male, but he doesn't sell drugs. But if he stands out on the corner — he's not bothering anybody — we'll hear complaints that he's young, he's black, he's selling drugs. But that's not necessarily the case.

But I can't stop and arbitrarily search him because he's young and he's black because someone accused him of selling drugs.

So how do you decipher between the [calls] that are real and the ones that aren't?

Well, I don't want to get into *what* we do. You could talk to Joe Gentile, our public information officer. Because *you* could be a drug dealer, trying to get information as to how you could sell drugs, by me telling you what we do. So I don't want to get into the operations aspect.

But if you have a complaint, call 311, the police non-emergency number, and a unit will come by and address it. This open-air mini-station is one of the things that we utilize. I'm sure the chief of police has gotten complaints about drug sales, and when they meet, they look at where the complaints come from, and here I am.

How long have you been assigned to PSA 511?

About 10 years. I'm on the day work shift. I was downtown for a year and a half, and then I came back. I worked the power shift for a few months. If you have any specific complaints, Lieutenant Renato Caldwell is the PSA 511 lieutenant.

Unfortunately, we have to sit out here, because of the amount of complaints that we get, in air that's terrible. I was out here one day and it was Code Orange, or whatever it is recognizing that it's poor air quality. The officers are still out. So I think that shows commitment that the police department has to address residents' complaints.

I would rather not breathe in that unhealthy air, but we have to do what we have to do.

I'm sure that if you were to write or call, and ask for more presence of mini-stations, that they would take that into consideration.

It clearly changes the way this block feels, [when you're here].

Ten years ago, it was really rough. Ten years ago, this was a rough camp, for lack of a better term. Now, if you were to go east of 15th Street, it's another scenario — much more violent activity.

But in six years from now, that area will be changed, and the complaints will be the nuisance complaints and drug sales, as well as the homicides and the domestics. So it takes a while. But this neighborhood is in transition.

One of the things that you've got — if people are concerned — their [*Officer Lawrence points to Excello's*] liquor license is up for renewal. I remember down on H Street, I had a sergeant — she was pretty vehement, and she was able to get a liquor license removed, and that cut down on the number of people who congregated, drinking. And drug dealers like to hide among the people who are standing out drinking.

You see? So that's one thing. I mean, I feel for the owner, but if the residents don't want him here, selling single-canned beer — it's a collective effort all the way around. There's only so much that each person could do.

This is a great country — we can't be like Saddam Hussein, just going up to people at random, because we don't like the way they look, or the activity that they're doing. But there's a lot of laws that the Council has put in place, and hopefully the neighborhood will become a great place of promise.

511 is one of the better PSAs, actually. We have property-crime problems, and we do have some drug sales, but if you were just to go north of H Street, into the Trinidad area and Ivy City area, it's totally different, the level of crime.

What's your sense of how [the police department's proposal to change the PSA boundaries would affect this PSA?]

I don't know. I think you'll get less officers.

Really? Why?

Because of the types of crimes. It's all based on calls to service. And they'll probably put most of the officers where there are a lot of 911 calls — robberies, stabbings, shootings. Just a few weeks ago, we had a guy with a sniper rifle and a vest, just on the 1600 block of Isherwood, firing on friends. Unbelievable.

The PSA which has the greatest number of homicides will probably get the greatest number of officers. Greatest number of rapes or violent crimes. Those crimes require more investigation. PSAs like 511, where we generate a lot of reports, like theft from auto — one officer can take several reports.

But I don't know! I think the chief has a plan, and he said its going to be six months to a year. Anything that we can do to help you in 511, you let Lieutenant Caldwell know. He's very supportive, and I'm sure he'll pass it down to the officers.

Thanks very much!

All right! Get that newsletter out so that people can read it, and hopefully I was able to give you *some* information. §

Contact the Corner Forum: by phone (544-2447); voicemail (517-9128);
e-mail (news@thecornerforum.org); or mail (536 13th St. NE).

Problems / Solutions

“Conferencing” May Help Community

Marc Borbely, 536 13th St. NE, spoke by phone today with Lauren Abramson of Baltimore, about a problem-solving method called Community Conferencing.

Can you tell us just a bit about who you are and what your qualifications are for talking about Community Conferencing?

Sure. My name is Lauren Abramson, and I'm the executive director of the Community Conferencing Center. I founded this program in Baltimore in 1995, and we've been using this social technology to deal with a lot of different kinds of conflicts.

Community Conferencing is basically a way for people in conflict to transform that conflict into cooperation. And it's based on native models of community justice from New Zealand, where we bring everybody together in a circle, and it's basically a structured conversation so that everybody participates, and everybody has a chance to tell their story. And then the group collectively decides, once they've heard from everybody, what can be done to make the situation better.

In our neighborhood, we have a block that many residents are concerned about. On this block, outside and across the street from a liquor store and a second grocery store that sells alcohol, teenagers often hang out, and some are very likely selling drugs.

Other people sometimes stand outside, drinking. There are residents who don't like the situation — some of them feel too uncomfortable to walk down that block, and avoid it when they can.

I'm wondering whether you think there's any chance Community Conferencing might be a positive thing for our community to try.

I really do. I think that it's always helpful when people come together collectively, and just have a chance to talk to each other.

Often what happens is that two or three people talk, and then a different two or three people talk, and there's a lot of misinformation that can happen that way. Also, if you can get everybody together — there truly is power in numbers.

You can get people there that you think might be helpful to do something about it. So if you feel like the police need to be there, you could have them there. If you feel like a D.C. Council person needs to be there, they can be there. Sometimes we can get the merchants there. People that you suspect are selling drugs, sometimes they'll attend. You can't make anybody come, but if you get everybody there together, you're more likely to come up with solutions that will actually have an impact.

Do you know of similar circumstances where this kind of problem has been addressed by your approach?

We've done so many kinds of neighborhood issues like this in Baltimore. And people really come up with very creative ways to make the situation better. A lot of times, when everybody bands together and is more of a collective, unified presence, it has a big impact on negative things that are going on.

Is your sense that talking to people who are selling drugs — does that do any good?

If they're willing to come. Some of the things that have happened is that the kids recognize that there are adults there that care about them, and a lot of times adults see that the kids have no positive alternatives, so a lot of times the adults, hearing what's going on with these young people, are willing to volunteer their time or find things that the young people can get involved in that they're interested in.

We've seen that over and over again. Younger and younger kids are getting involved in the drug trade, I think, just because there aren't reasonable and positive alternatives.

How would it work — what would people here have to do if they wanted to try this?

Well, we don't have a program in D.C. yet, but we have some contacts, and some people in D.C. who've taken our training. So somebody should contact our office, and we can see if we can get something going in D.C., either at no or pretty nominal cost to people. We have done a lot of cases around the activity around liquor stores. See what people say, and then get back in touch.

Okay, great. Thanks a lot.

Sure. §

Updates

CORNER FORUM ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The following people helped produce or distribute the July 12 issue of the Corner Forum: Marc Borbely, 536 13th St. NE (editing, folding, distributing); Sharon Cochran, 1300 block of Emerald Street NE (distributing); Ron Neal, Annandale, Virginia (distributing); and Stephan Smith, 1300 block of E Street NE (distributing). There are 73 households in the Corner Forum area that are subscribed to the newsletter (26 on E Street, 24 on Emerald Street, 16 on 13th Street, and 7 on Duncan Place). §

Tidbits

NEW BIKE LANES PLANNED: Jim Sebastian (671-2331), the Bicycle Program manager for the District Department of Transportation, told Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A in a letter this month that the city will create three five-foot wide bicycle lanes in the area the end of this summer: on C Street NE, between 6th and 15th Streets; on 14th Street NE, between Maryland Avenue and Potomac Avenue SE; and on 15th Street NE, between Maryland Avenue and Potomac Avenue SE. The bike lanes will be created by painting an additional white line between the parking stripe and the driving lane. §

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We take this opportunity to make the community aware of what's going on in your area. ACORN needs your support in the matter of mandatory IZ, and we invite you to call our office for further information on meetings on this issue.

Believe me, there is no time like the present to get involved in the developing that is taking place in our area. We cannot change what is already being developed, but we can certainly make our demands on any future developments!

ACORN is a nonprofit organization that represents the voice of the community. Please call us at 547-9292 or e-mail dcacorn@acorn.org. Join us in making a difference in our community.

Remember, this is your community — have a voice NOW! §

Questions

HOW HIGH ARE YOU ALLOWED TO BUILD? Cynthia Gardner, 1327 E St. NE, asks about the third floor being added on to the house at 330 Tennessee Ave. NE. (A building permit posted at the site indicates the owner has permission to build a third story.) Ms. Gardner can see the house from her windows. She had thought there were height limitations on houses around here, and wonders why the owner is allowed to add a third story. §



Tips

POSSIBLE THIEF ALERT: Barbara Cromartie, 532 13th St. NE, says she saw a young man walking on 13th Street, from F to Emerald, then into Emerald, then from Emerald to E Street on Tuesday morning at about 4:30. She says he was using a flashlight to peer into cars as he walked past them. She said it seemed like he was looking to see what was lying inside, and possibly which ones had their doors unlocked. She advises readers not to leave any valuables in their cars.

FREE ONE-DAY METRO PASSES: The Metropolitan Transit Authority is including one-day Metro passes and other goodies, including cameras, maps and visitor guides, in Visitor Packs being given out for free at the D.C. Visitor Information Center at 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, while supplies last. The person who answered the phone today said there were still many packs available, but that now only one pack is being given to each group of people. All you have to do to get a pack is say the “magic words”: (1)-(866)-DCISFUN — which is the Center’s toll-free number. Hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. §

Calendar of Events

If you attend any of these events, please send in anything from a few lines to a long article about what happened. And if you know of any upcoming events that other readers might be interested in, send them in! Events are free, unless otherwise noted, and open to all.

— COMPILED BY MARC BORBELY
536 13th St. NE

Monday, July 21

Sunset. “The Postman Always Rings Twice.” (1946) 113 minutes. Screen on the Green. By HBO and America Online. Between 4th and 7th Streets, at Constitution Avenue NW, on the National Mall. <http://www.digitalcity.com/washington/screenonthegreen>.

Wednesday, July 23

9 a.m. Volunteer to Help Clean up the Schools. Volunteers will be removing graffiti, painting, washing walls and more, at about 12 schools. Kickoff at Eastern Senior High School, 1700 East Capitol St. NE. Volunteers are encouraged to call 724-4222.

9:30 a.m. Excello (419 13th St. NE) Liquor License Renewal — Status Hearing. To update the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board on negotiations between Excello and protestants. At 941 North Capitol St. NE, 7th floor. Info, Laura Byrd, 442-4359 or Zandra Goode, 442-4418. §

7-9 p.m. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A Alcohol Beverage Licensing & Public Safety Committee. Monthly meeting. At Miner Elementary School, 600 block of 16th Street NE. Info, Jessica Ward, 396-3193.

Thursday, July 24

11:15 a.m. - 3 p.m. Predatory Lending Conference. “An opportunity for individuals to be informed as to what predatory lending is, who is at risk and how to recognize the warning signs.” By the U.S. Housing and Urban Development. At the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, 2660 Woodley Rd. NW. Info, Sylvia Hawkinsm 275-9200, ext. 3803. <http://www.hud.gov/local/index.cfm?state=dc>.

Saturday, July 26

10 a.m. Corner Forum meeting. “Help assemble the current issue and plan future ones.” At the home of Marc Borbely and Tammi Cioffi, 536 13th St. NE, 544-2447. §

InForum

Keep Up the Good Work

BY JAMES L. CLARK, 1311 EMERALD ST. NE

I am renewing my subscription to the Corner Forum because it is so interesting and informative. Even though we live in this small area, there are many things that we read in the Corner Forum that we would not know otherwise. Keep up the good work. §