

Summary of Community Meeting re: Wheeler/Blair Ave Shootings – March 28, 2019

Nearly 100 residents attended a meeting at Work IT, a co-working space at 635 Fairview, to get an update from police regarding the two shootings near the intersection of Blair and Wheeler on Saturday, March 23 and Sunday, March 24.

Members of Saint Paul Police Department's Western District were in attendance, including:

- Senior Commander Steve Anderson (who grew up on Edmund and Hamline)
- Patrol Commander, Paul Ford (everyone in blue uniform in the neighborhood is one of his officers)
- Force Unit Commander, Kent Cleveland
- Crime Prevention specialist Patty Lammers.
- Sgt. Shawn Campbell from the Gang/Gun Unit to be in attendance.
- Investigators: Bobby Donahue, Mark Reding and Shawn Murphy

Officer Donahue noted that 2 individuals were shot on Saturday night near the Blair and Wheeler intersection. The two victims, who aren't from St Paul, had a phone for sale on FB and a buyer told them to meet them at an address on Blair Ave. It appears that location was chosen at random. Suspects brandished weapons. Both victims were struck with non-life threatening injuries, they are home and out of hospital.

One of the suspects in the incident was captured in Fridley (see newstory: <https://www.twincities.com/2019/03/25/man-woman-injured-in-shooting-when-they-go-to-sell-iphone-in-st-paul-and-are-robbed/>). The second suspect is in custody, but not charged as BCA is still reviewing evidence.

After the shooting on Saturday night, SPPD saturated the area and surrounding neighborhoods and increased our patrol visibility and continue to do so.

On Sunday, two groups of assailants were having a dispute of some kind and began firing. No one was hit, but a bullet struck a home near the intersection. The two incidents were not related to each other. The police have witness reports with vehicle and suspect descriptions and they continue to follow up on leads.

Commander Anderson reiterated that our neighborhood has relatively low crime. (For crime stats in Hamline Midway, see: <https://information.stpaul.gov/Public-Safety/District-Council-11-Hamline-Midway-Crime-Incidents/j95j-25b7>) For more information about how to use this data, contact Patty Lammers, patricia.lammers@ci.stpaul.mn.us

The Commander encouraged neighbors to attend the monthly community meetings that are held **every third Tuesday**: The meetings are at **930am and 630pm** and are held at the Western District office (389 N. Hamline)

Audience Question & Answer

Q: What are you doing when you add extra people?

A: Example from two years ago, challenges near Hamline Park. Police deployed patrol resources, bike officers, traffic unit officers and community outreach staff towards the problem. We were able to identify suspects and problem properties that were largely responsible for the increase in violent behavior. Able to provide resources to impacted individuals and made arrests on those causing the most negative impacts and continued to work with community. This saturation effort also included using crime stat mapping data, the SPPD Gang/gun Unit, and the Force Unit that specializes in problem properties and nuisance quality of life type concerns. Got good results. But couldn't keep all resources there because violent crime spiked somewhere else.

Last summer Police found some problem properties, half dozen individuals causing the problems. They are all part of a couple of families. They have reached out with community outreach to talk to aunts, uncles, grandparents who feel like the young adults are difficult to control. The police have made arrests, try to re-direct behaviors.

Encourage neighbors to call when people are engaging in troublesome behavior.

Q: Does the city use evidence based CDC programs around prevention, intervention (models in Oakland, Boston, and Chicago). Does the city have community-based, community-led programs where trusted organizations deliver services and have a much different relationship with people that might be engaging in the criminal justice system?

A: The Police Department has the [Ambassadors program](#) and a [Community Engagement](#) unit that is the connection point to any kind of these programs.

Q: What is the trend with shots fired?

A: Compared to last year, the neighborhood has had 30-35% fewer shots fired calls.

Q. First, neighbor noted that he lived in neighborhood for more than 20 years, anytime there was an incident officers respond quickly and in force (round of applause.) Noted that there is a lot of negative activity happening near the corner store on Minnehaha and Fairview (e.g, drug dealing, idling cars with loud music)

A: Police said that anytime you see **behavior** (not just an individual) that is suspicious, call it in. Be as specific as you can. If enough calls get generated to a location then the Police can do more. **291-1111** is the non-emergency line. If an activity is in progress and could be serious (e.g. people fighting, looks like something is being stolen) call 911. Even when you are being asked questions by the dispatcher, know that they've already contacted the police.

A: Hamline Midway Coalition added that when you call the details matter. Specificity is helpful, it helps the Police build the case.

Q: What can we do as residents

A: Come to the monthly meeting. Contact the Commander Anderson, he'll connect to the right people. Watch your neighborhood, be out on the sidewalks talking to people. An active, friendly neighborhood is a deterrent. Criminals don't want to be recognized. Create a block club (the next meeting for Block Clubs will be held at Work It on April 11th. Flyer attached)

Q: Challenge of not feeling safe walking to/from YMCA at night.

A: This is a matter of personal comfort. In general, need to walk with a purpose. For more information about personal safety, contact Patty Lammers, Crime Prevention Coordinator.

Q: How do we know when a foot search is over? When is it safe to go back outside? How to stay safe in the moment?

A: SPPD Public Information Officers will have an update (probably 20 minutes+ after the event.) If there's a large police presence, stay inside, listen to TV/Radio. If there's a perimeter set up, wait until it comes down.

Q: Where do you go to get information about what is happening in the neighborhood?

A: Western District Facebook Page, updated daily. If you are asking about an ongoing investigation, the best info is what is printed in the paper, because that is what is public. Also see the crime statistics mentioned above.

Councilmember Nelson thanked the police and neighbors and spoke about additional opportunities to invest in people and focus on prevention. She noted that Midway is fast growing place with lots of children and the city's investments in local rec centers, parks, lighting hasn't kept pace. Encourages neighbors to have more eyes on the street.

Neighbor Jake and his wife are MMA instructors and they graciously offered their martial arts studio (<https://www.theart-karate.com/>) as a place where they could offer free classes to help kids, young adults let out aggression. Would also be willing to offer self defense class in the neighborhood.

***Last item: If people have questions about the soccer stadium, there is a city website where you can submit comments and questions as this new venue begins operations:

<https://www.stpaul.gov/allianz>