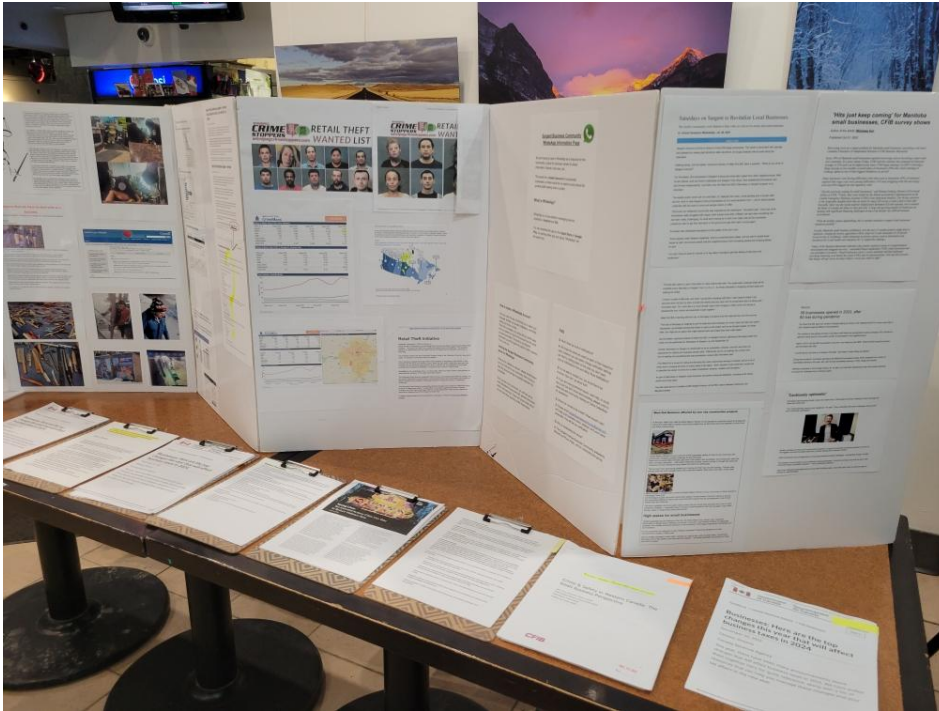# _Sargent Avenue Business Community_

10 Easy Steps on How to Reduce Crime in Your Neighbourhood

There are plenty of easy steps that you can take to help make your community a better place. By building a relationship with your neighbours and your local police department, you'll raise awareness and make it easier to enact change in your area.

Just remember, you are not going to find success if you go out trying to fight crime yourself. The goal here is to build your community up to make it less welcoming for criminals, not to confront strangers or call the police every time you see something vaguely suspicious.

Get to know your neighbours.

The stronger your community is, the safer it will be.

Introduce yourself to the people on your block and local businesses, hang out outside, wave to folks as they walk by, and chat it up with the people in your neighbourhood. Not only will it be easier to start programs and spot suspicious people in your neighbourhood if you know everyone, but it will huge deterrent to criminals if they catch a glimpse of the unity in your neighbourhood.

- Criminals don't like to be challenged. If a burglar is driving around looking for houses to break into, they're going to be put-off if they see a bunch of folks in the neighbourhood chatting it up.
- There's a strategy you can use here known as positive loitering. The premise is that if you hang out outside with people in the neighbourhood, you can keep your eyes peeled and show criminals that they aren't welcome.
- The occasional block party or garage sales are a great way to get to know your neighbours!

Start a neighbourhood watch.

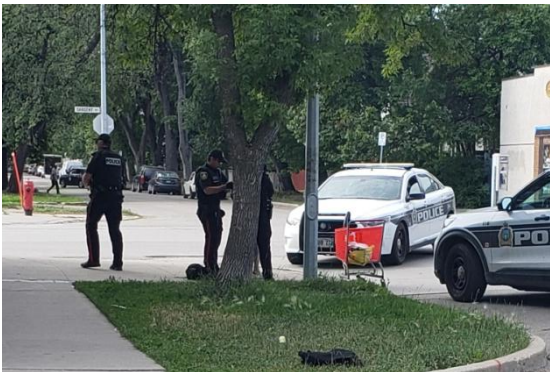**Talk to your neighbours to see if anyone is interested.**

If you can get a few folks to volunteer, call your local police department to get the ball rolling. The police department will walk you through the process, which can differ from area to area. In most cases, the police will assign a liaison officer to work with you. Once the watch is established, start meeting regularly to establish objectives and decide where you want to focus your efforts.

- The first goal of a neighbourhood watch is to report crime and suspicious activity. Outside of that, you could institute citizen patrols, clean up vandalism, or organize youth events.
- Remind everyone to stay reasonably cautious and not to get paranoid about crime. Some watch groups have resulted in racism and hysteria, because people started feeling like they were the cops. Keep everyone cool to make sure things don't get carried away.

Get to know your local police department.

TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME®

Attend any outreach events that the police organize for the public.

Say hello to officers and introduce yourself when you run into them at the local coffee shop. Your local police have the lowdown on what's going on in your area, and they can let you know ahead of time if there's a spike in car theft, or burglaries. Work with local law enforcement and community groups to protect our area.

Report suspicious activity when you see it.

Do not hesitate to call the police if you see a crime taking place.

If someone is talking to a child and you know they aren't the parent, a business being robbed, or if you see someone trying to get into your neighbour's house, call 911. If there has been an ongoing issue or you want to call attention to suspicious behavior, call your local police department directly to report it. Getting law enforcement involved will send the message that crime isn't tolerated in your neighbourhood.

- Don't call 911 if there isn't a crime taking place or the suspicious activity isn't an emergency or a crime in progress. Instead, call non-emergency at 204-986-6222
- For issues that are not so black and white if they constitute an emergency, check resources in your relevant area to see what issues they expected to be reported to 911.
- Don't try to confront criminals yourself. You're just putting yourself in harm's way. Let the professionals handle it.

Push local politicians to do more.

Contact your MLA, MPs, and City Counselors to do more.

Voice your concerns about crime in the area, and ask them what they're planning to do to fix the problem. Tell them about any specific issues you're facing in your neighbourhood to raise the alarm. Even if they don't have a plan yet, pushing your local politicians sends the signal that their constituents want more help fighting crime.

- You could ask them to tear down vacant properties in your area. There's a lot of evidence that abandoned buildings are linked to higher crime rates.
- If you don't have streetlights, ask for them! Street lighting can dramatically lower crime.
- If you've noticed an uptick in problematic loitering or public drinking around local businesses, you could let your local representative know

Keep your neighbourhood clean.

If your area looks disorganized and unkempt, it may attract crime.

Criminals are more likely to assume they can get away with something if it looks like people don't care about the neighbourhood. Host a block cleanup event where neighbours get together and clean up litter, or take matters into your own hand and mow the grass in that vacant lot down the street. By fixing the area up, you'll deter criminals from hanging around in your area.

- Cleaning up and painting over the graffiti in your neighbourhood is a great way to make it look nicer.
- This is a phenomenon known as broken window theory. The premise is that small signs of decay—like broken windows—send a psychological message that law and order are not being enforced. It's a hotly-debated idea, but there's evidence that it has merit.

Increase the number of cameras around your business.

Install security cameras around your home to prevent crime on the block.

Contact local contractors and get some quotes before you get cameras installed on the front and back of your home. Choose locations where the cameras will be highly visible, and encourage your neighbours to do the same. This way, criminals will stay away from your home.

- This is really more of a personal crime prevention tactic, but if enough people in your neighbourhood put cameras up, it will have a positive impact on the area as a whole.
- For businesses, cameras are a deterrent. They can stop theft or shoplifting, or catch it so you can report the individuals to the authorities.

Put up signage as a warning to criminals.

Talk to your local politicians about putting up "tough on crime" signs.

Those little "neighbourhood watch" and "active law enforcement zone" signs can have a huge impact. You can also place "we call the police" signs in your yard and window and encourage your neighbours to do the same. Criminals are much less likely to hang around if they know the neighbourhood is on the lookout for suspicious behavior.

- You can throw a security company sign in your yard, even if you don't have a security system installed.
- Even if you never got an official neighbourhood watch off of the ground, you can still ask about putting the signs up! Criminals won't know the difference.
- Consult your local government before nailing signs to electrical poles and such. In most cases they're going to honor small requests like these.

Start a community garden and cultivate green spaces.

It sounds silly, but nature puts the mind at ease.
Spence neighbourhood works hard to keep green spaces in the West End maintained.
Well-maintained green spaces aren't a deterrent on their own, but they have a naturally calming effect that may lower crime. You could turn a vacant lot into a community garden to bring folks into your area together, or get to work on your home garden. You could also host an event at your local park to get rid of litter and plant something new.

- When it comes to your hedges and bushes, make sure you trim them low enough so that you can see out of the window. Keep them small enough that a potential burglar won't be able to hide themselves near a door and hide while they try to break in.

Give your time or money to local youth groups.

The best way to reduce crime is to prevent it.

Unfortunately, younger people tend to commit more crime than older folks. Giving the youth in your area more things to do is a great way to help them stay on the right track. By supporting local community organizations, you'll help others out while keeping crime down in your area.

- This is also just a great way to make the world a better place. The more positivity you can inject into your community, the better you're going to feel about your neighbourhood.
- With farmers markets, craft shows, community events, and family fun days just to name a few, you can keep your community going strong.
- Or as simple as on a hot day sitting outside and giving out bottles of water to get to know your neighbours. The smallest kind gesture makes the community stronger.