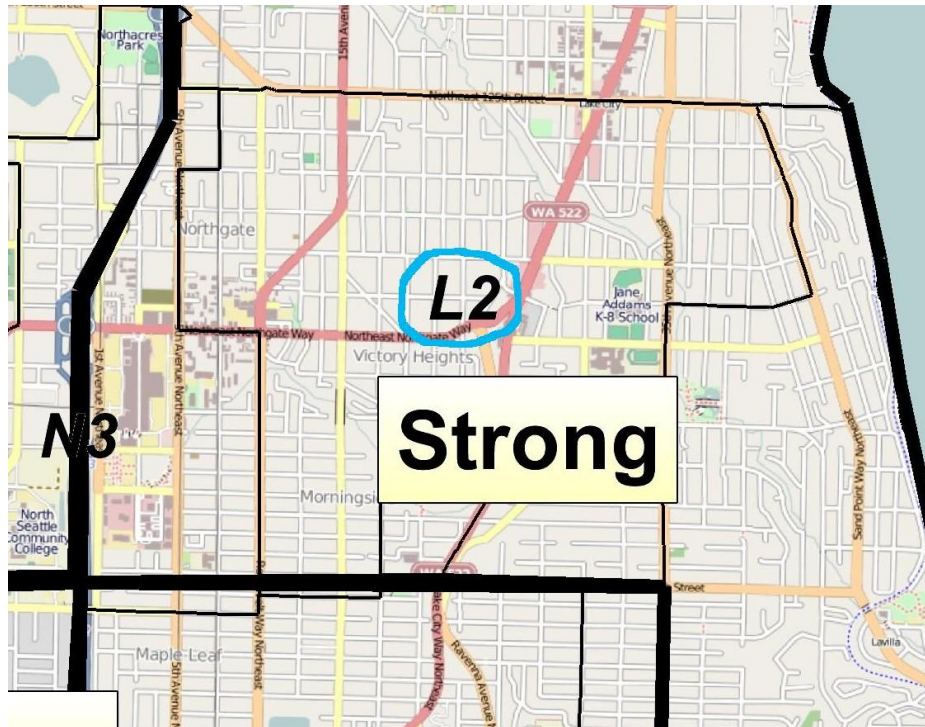


Pinehurst Crime Meeting
March 13, 2013, 7:00 PM
Meadowbrook Community Center

About 15 neighbors met to discuss the current uptick in Pinehurst burglaries. Seattle Police Department's Crime Prevention Coordinator, Terrie Johnston (terrie.johnston@seattle.gov), gave us information & fielded questions, and everyone shared ideas on how to safeguard our homes. First Terrie presented us with data on the crimes occurring in Lincoln 2, the North Precinct sector that includes Pinehurst. The map shows Lincoln 2 as L2. Kipp Strong is the Community Police Team officer assigned to L2.



During the period January through February 2012 there were 19 burglaries in Lincoln 2. This year, January through February 2013, there were 43. That is a huge increase. So there is someone out there actively working the area now. Not all the burglaries are being done by the same person, but many of them seem to be. SPD thinks it is a man, about 6 feet tall, with about size 12 shoes. This profile resulted from one incident where a neighbor saw a man with a flashlight in the yard of someone the neighbor knew was away. He called 911 and the police brought out a tracking dog. The dog lost the trail eventually, i.e. the burglar went into a car or a house, but the police found a footprint by the fence.

On a side note, car prowls are half what they were last year – 22 this year vs. 40 last year in that same January-February time frame. Car prowls are usually under-reported; please do report them even if nothing was taken. It all adds up to give the police a picture of criminal activity in the neighborhood.

The burglaries usually occur between 9:00 am and 7:00 pm. Typically our burglar breaks down a front or back door, or throws a rock through glass. Normally a high percentage of burglaries in the area are through unlocked windows and doors, but the current pattern is different. Of the 43 burglaries this year, only five of them were through unlocked windows and doors. He is probably knocking or ringing at the front door to be sure no one is home, then either shouldering in the door or going around to the back yard.

Burglars typically don't stay in a house long; nine minutes is a long time. They rummage through drawers and look in medicine cabinets. Property that's typically being taken by **our** burglar is cash; jewelry; pills; small electronics.

He often goes straight to the bedroom where he knows people leave their pocket change, watches, jewelry, phones, etc. In at least one case a dog in the house did not deter him (it was admittedly a docile dog).

The police are aware of this large bump in burglaries and have increased the staffing levels in the area. But they also rely on citizen eyes and ears to help catch criminals, so you can help by paying special attention to what's going on around you. Anything that seems slightly "out of place" or is occurring at an unusual time of day could be criminal activity. If you see suspicious behavior, or suspicious persons, do not hesitate to call 911. Do not second guess whether it is 911-worthy - let the operator decide. Write down license plate numbers and descriptions of suspicious people. Get to know your neighbors by name and learn to identify their vehicles so you know who looks out of place. Watch your neighbors' houses, especially when you know they're gone. Make a list of neighbors' email addresses and phone numbers so you can contact each other. Start a block watch - Terrie can help you set one up.

It also helps the whole neighborhood reduce crime by making your property more crime-resistant. Terrie Johnston will come out and give you a free home security audit that includes many suggestions specific to your property. Meanwhile, here are a few tips discussed at the meeting:

- Do things that will slow down a burglar to give a neighbor time to notice him, such as:
 - Lock the gate into the back yard so burglar has to climb the fence
 - Put screens on windows – burglar has to take it off before throwing a rock through it
- Do things that will make noise so a neighbor will hear and notice activity, such as:
 - Install an audible alarm. Audible is better than silent because it can also scare away the burglar. Silent alarms notify the company and the police, but it can take awhile for the police to get there.
 - Attach chimes to gates and doors
- Make the house look occupied when you're not home, such as:
 - Leave a radio on a talk show so it sounds like voices inside
 - Use a timer on one or more lamps inside the house
- Make your home a less interesting and desirable place to burgle:
 - Keep a porch light on from dusk to dawn
 - Install deadbolts, and attach the strike plates to the door frames with 3-4" screws
 - Keep shrubbery trimmed so neighbors can see your house.
 - Display a sign that says you have a dog
 - Close blinds/drapes in rooms that have a lot of electronic equipment, such as a home office

If a suspicious person comes to your door, do not ignore the knock and hope he goes away. He may think you're not home and break in. Instead, grab your phone and talk through the door. Give some excuse, such as that you're sick and don't want to open the door. If he gets an attitude, call 911. Some solicitors are legitimate, but some are linked to burglaries. If you are uncomfortable or the solicitor gets belligerent when you say you don't want to donate or buy from them, trust your gut and call 911. Try to get a good description for the police.

If you come home and surprise a burglar, do not confront him. Instead, retreat and call 911. An officer will come as soon as he/she can, depending on the priority of other calls the police need to respond to at the time. If your stuff has been stolen, it's helpful to have an inventory with serial numbers in case the police can recover it at pawn shops or in burglar's homes.

After all this unpleasant talk about crime, it's important to remember that we actually live in a pretty darn safe neighborhood, our streets are full of nice people walking their dogs, taking their kids to parks, and gardening in their yards. Pinehurst is a great neighborhood and we'll just keep getting better as we learn to work together to know each other and to keep our eye out for each other.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Terrie Johnston. Our Community Police Team Officer Kipp Strong (kipp.strong@seattle.gov) is another good contact. He can help track down graffiti taggers, or find out what's going on with that vacant house on your street if you think it is a crime magnet.