



Crime and Safety Update – February 2023

Fellow Residents:

Just over a year ago I reported to you on the challenge we had with crime in our City. And I asked for your help.

So, first of all, thank you. I know that many of you took action and provided feedback. I am happy to report that in 2022 we made progress in several areas. We still have a lot of work to do in others – and we still need your help!

A quick recap. 2021 was a difficult year for our City regarding crime. Home burglaries were up. Auto thefts were up. We had an assault with shots fired at the Verona columns. Some of you have heard me say this before, but at my employer, we say, “the truth has to be good enough.” 2021 was not good by our standards – even one crime is too many. We had to do better.

Our residents, Police Department, staff and governing bodies all made concerted efforts in 2022. We saw progress in some key areas. Fighting and reducing crime is, what author Simon Sinek calls, an “Infinite Game.” Unlike the Super Bowl that just happened (and wow, what a game!), reducing crime is a task we must tackle (pun intended) everyday.

2022 Crime Statistic Review

Here are the key statistics from 2022:

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
Burglary	15	25	4	14	12
Theft	81	55	44	34	47
Auto Theft	21	15	10	10	8

As you can see, burglaries were reduced to roughly their pre-pandemic number. We have made progress. Thank you.

Theft, the majority of which includes stolen autos and theft from a vehicle, was up dramatically last year. Every Northeast Johnson County city saw a surge in this category. This is where we need your continuing action and help urgently.

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At the Joint Homes' Association Meeting in January, Chief Roberson and I presented. I noted that 100% of the vehicles locked in Mission Hills through November 2022 were not stolen. The ONLY vehicle stolen in 2022 in Mission Hills that was locked was a Kia, and some of you may know that late model Kia's have a huge problem with being easy to steal with a USB drive and a screwdriver. Every other stolen vehicle in Mission Hills last year was unlocked with the keys in it.

More than 90% of the thefts from autos in 2022 were from UNLOCKED vehicles.

I wish we could keep bad actors out of our City, but unfortunately, we cannot. We can, however, make Mission Hills a place to which they do not want to come. Please help.

How Can Residents Help?

Lock your car. Always. Don't leave your keys in your car – modern cars with a FOB are remarkably easy to steal when that FOB is in the car. They are almost impossible to steal without it. And most thieves don't want to make the effort to break into a locked car.

Keep valuables out of sight. A computer backpack in the back seat or a purse in the front seat is a magnet.

Call if you see something suspicious. 913-642-5151 should be in your speed dial. Please stop reading this letter and enter it in your phone under "PV/Mission Hills Police Non-Emergency." We are fortunate to have the resources to respond to suspicious activity, and a call to this number will NEVER trump a 911 call. Emergency = 911. Suspicious = 913-642-5151.

9 o'clock routine. Full details are at the end of this letter, but please make this a habit just like brushing your teeth.

Additional Actions Taken

Cameras/LPRs – We have completed almost all the Phase I & II installations of cameras and license plate readers (LPRs). As you drive the City, you will see them at many intersections including 63rd & State Line, Belinder Circle, and Tomahawk & Mission.

In addition to their deterrent value, these cameras and LPRs have already been crucial to catching and/or prosecuting multiple criminals. As Chief Roberson will tell you, there was one serial thief where the video evidence linked him to more than a dozen crimes in our City (as well as many dozens in our neighboring cities).

RCAs – our police used Reducing Criminal Activity programs again in 2022 with good outcomes. These multi-faceted strategies helped. They will continue.

Solicitation – As a reminder, commercial solicitors must now register with the City in advance of soliciting. Any commercial solicitor who comes to your home should be able to produce a copy of said registration.

The City now maintains a “No Commercial Solicitation” opt-out list. You may add your address to this list. If you are on this list and the police receive a report of commercial solicitation at your home, they can more aggressively address the situation.

To add your home to the “No Solicitation” list, please feel free to call City Hall at 913-362-9620, or go to the City’s Solicitation page here:

<https://www.missionhillsks.gov/380/Solicitation>

Coyotes

A Mission Hills’ resident’s dog was killed in December, 2021 in their fenced backyard by a coyote. We have multiple reports from other residents in Mission Hills and neighboring cities of coyote attacks on pets. We have reports of coyotes following residents and their pets on walks through the City. The Fairway Animal Hospital put out an alert to its neighbors in the fall that two dogs had been killed, possibly by coyotes. We knew from the beginning that this issue would be difficult to address.

The Crime & Safety Committee has done yeoman’s work on a very challenging subject. They consulted with multiple experts, including the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (<https://ksoutdoors.com/Services/Wildlife-Damage-Control/Coyotes-in-the-City>) and made recommendations to the Council. As I discussed in both the summer and fall newsletters, we began trapping coyotes in 2022 and caught and eliminated two.

In early February, an unfortunate incident occurred in Peetwood Park as we continued our efforts to trap and remove these dangerous animals. Public safety for everyone – residents, guests, visitors, employees and those just passing through – will always be our top priority. A Prairie Village resident unfortunately walked their dogs off-leash, and the dogs were caught in our traps. I am saddened when anyone or any pet is injured in our City, regardless of the reason.

The right course of action any time an incident occurs is to thoroughly and thoughtfully review it. Our Crime & Safety Committee will be doing just that. We must find a way forward on this difficult topic because doing nothing does not appear to be the right path. In 2022 coyotes attacked young children, pets and adults in cities across the country from Woodland Hills, Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach, California, to Dallas, Texas, to Cincinnati, Ohio to Panton, Vermont, just to name a few.

To enhance our communication on this topic, we have added a “Coyote Management” section to the City’s website here:

<https://www.missionhillsks.gov/389/Coyote-Management>

Summary

We made progress in 2022 through the hard work of every resident, our police and staff, so again, thank you.

We cannot stop being vigilant. Please put 913-642-5151 in your phone address book. Please don’t hesitate to call when you see something suspicious. Lock your car!

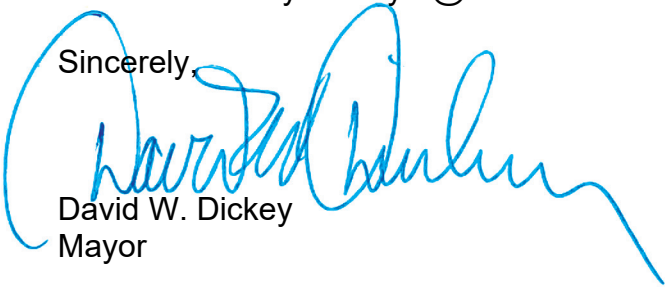
If you walk, run or bike in the City in the early morning or evening, please make sure you always wear reflective clothes or a light (and if you take your pet(s), that they have something too!).

Finally, please make the 9pm routine a habit:

- Double check any cars you park outside and remove valuables.
- Lock any outside cars.
- Close your garage door.
- Make sure your exterior lights are on.
- Make sure your doors are locked.
- Turn on your alarm (if you have one).

Thank you again. As always, please don’t hesitate to call City Hall with any questions or email me directly at mayor@missionhillsks.gov.

Sincerely,



David W. Dickey
Mayor