



Columbus Police Department

159 S. Ludington St.
Columbus, WI. 53925

920-623-5919 (Main)
920-623-5930 (Fax)

June 15, 2011

Do we have any broken windows in Columbus?



Originally proposed by Dr. James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, broken windows theory suggests that a society or subset of society that appears to be lawless will itself breed lawlessness. Broken windows theory is most closely associated with conservative sociology, focusing on social cohesion and law and order.

The central theme of broken windows theory holds that when neighborhoods appear to be broken down, disordered, and generally unfriendly, they serve as a magnet to delinquent behavior and crime. This is essentially to say that communities that lack in any sense of social cohesion and mutual interest witness a significantly higher risk of criminality.

Menna, W. 2010. [The "Broken Window" crime theory.](#)

Found online at: <http://www.helium.com/items/1398654-evaluating-broken-windows-theory-of-crime>

In an effort to address disorder and enhance the quality of life in this community, the Columbus Police Department is focusing on the enforcement of those violations that are a detriment to the safety and positive image of this community.

Officers will be seeking out certain code violations and extra patrols will be conducted to address the more problematic issues that we, as a community, face. A community that appears to



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be in disarray portrays an image that we don't care. Properties that appear abandoned and unkempt invite criminal activity such as vandalism, theft, illegal drug activity and other public nuisances. They also have a negative effect on surrounding property values and the overall value of the community. Issues such as noxious weeds, vehicles in disrepair and garbage and junk storage contribute to a much bigger problem that has the potential to negatively affect the city. Many of these problems can be easily addressed by simply spending a reasonable amount of time on maintenance and repair. Some examples are:

- Cut the grass and remove weeds on a regular basis. A well groomed lawn shows that the owner cares and helps to reduce bug infestation.
- Trim trees and bushes. Do not block windows with overgrown foliage. This gives criminals a place to hide while attempting to break into a building.
- Consider having energy efficient, exterior light on during hours of darkness. Motion sensing lights work well and save energy. This deters criminal activity and allows officers to recognize your property better while patrolling.
- Fix broken windows and doors. Property in disrepair sends out a message to criminals that "I don't care" and invites problems such as vandalism and theft.
- Have respect for your neighbors by keeping noise down to reasonable and sensible volume. Sound travels further during these warm, summer months when people have their windows and doors open.
- Keep the volume to a reasonable level in your car. Loud music (and illegal exhaust systems) can disturb other motorists and residential occupants. It also interferes with the operator's ability to hear warning sounds and emergency vehicle sirens.
- Get to know your neighbors. Be able to recognize who lives in your neighborhood and which vehicles are normally driving through your area. Look out for each other and report suspicious activity to the police right away.
- Keep parked vehicles locked and property hidden out of sight. Thieves are opportunists and will go for the easier target. Also consider keeping your garage door closed as much as possible. This safeguards your property and can keep the interior cooler during the warm months and warmer during the colder months.



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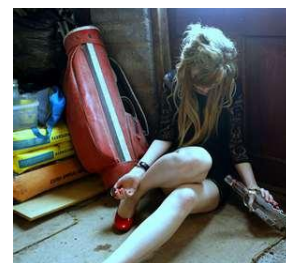
Image is everything...

How do we want to be portrayed as a community? It can be difficult to attract new businesses and residents if our community appears to have negative issues that aren't being dealt with. The quality of life in any community can directly influence the economy of that community. If you look around the city, you will see numerous properties for sale. Some are residential and some are business. A lot of this has to do with the economic recession that started a few years ago. However, business owners and people are less inclined to make a major, financial commitment to purchase real estate in an area where they feel there is crime and disorder. Crime and disorder can scare away business and it also reduces property values.

Certainly, there are a number of vacant store fronts and business properties for sale in the downtown area. A variety of things may have contributed to this situation. I know the city is working hard to attract new owners and keep the current ones here. However, when we have disorderly and intoxicated persons damaging property, urinating in public and fighting in the downtown area, it can be difficult to "Sell" our community. I am committed to working with the public, local businesses, other organizations and the resources of this police department in an effort to solve these problems.

Therefore, I will be deploying extra patrols to the downtown area to address issues with public intoxication, open intoxicants and other lewd and disorderly acts that are associated with irresponsible service and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages. I started a directed patrol mission last year to deal with this issue. I am pleased to say that our enforcement efforts resulted in a significant increase in arrests and citations for alcohol related violations and other disorderly offenses. It is my hope that our continued efforts will send a strong and clear message to these violators that their inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.

This...





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Teamwork and Community Collaboration



The Columbus Police Department needs your assistance in this matter. You can help in two ways. First, make sure your property is within code. You can access all city ordinances online at the following link:

http://library2.municode.com/default-test/home.htm?infobase=12534&doc_action=whatsnew

Secondly, report violations to the city. We can't fix it if we don't know about it.

Violations, concerns or questions can be communicated to the police department in several ways. You can call our main number at 920-623-5919. You can also send any member of the department an email using the link on the city's webpage, found at:

<http://www.columbuswi.us/CityDept/police/police.asp>

The public can also report violations through the use of the city's new, online service request program. *Citizen Request Tracker* allows you to report a variety of issues or concerns to the appropriate, city department. I would highly encourage you to use this service to report code violations or other problems. This service allows for us to better track and respond to your issue. You can access this service by going to the following link:

<http://wi-columbus.civicplus.com/requesttracker.aspx>

A property and a community that portrays an appearance of disorder invite acts of disorder. We are all stakeholders in this community. What happens in one part of the city can affect all of us. Take responsibility and take pride! Together we can make Columbus a safe and attractive city in which to live, work and play.

Daniel M. Meister
Chief of Police



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Sincerely,

Daniel M. Meister
Chief of Police