

Public Safety is Priority One

Public safety is number one priority for Mayor Walling and his administration. The City budgets reflect this fact: a greater percentage of our resources are dedicated to public safety than ever before at more than 70% and growing each year. It takes strong partnerships with the community to create true safety and the police department has to adopt innovative solutions that have been proven to work in other communities. Mayor Walling is calling for a new comprehensive approach to public safety in Flint that calls on every community member to become part of the solution.

New crime watch programs are forming in Flint that use the resources of the nine police mini-stations to stay better informed and to report problems quicker and more effectively. Crime watch groups and block clubs in every ward of the city now have a convenient place to meet and community members have a local hub for exchanging information with the police. The police mini-stations are staffed by a growing group of volunteers trained through the Blue Badge Volunteer Corps Initiative. Flint's Blue Badge volunteers serve as the eyes and ears of their community. Their goal is to help local businesses, residents, and the police cooperate more effectively. You can help make your neighborhood a safer place to live by joining a crime watch group, volunteering through the Blue Badge Corps, or calling the anonymous tip line at (810) 237-6812.

The Cease Fire Initiative, begun in July of last year, is another way that community members are stepping forward to break the cycle of violence that plagues too many of our neighborhoods. The Cease Fire Initiative is a partnership between the city administration and community leaders from Flint's congregations. It is based on similar initiatives in Chicago, IL and High Point, NC that achieved fundamental change in neighborhoods that struggled with high crime (particularly murders) linked to the drug trade. The Cease Fire Initiative calls for a community-wide rejection of drug violence as the norm. It seeks to provide deterrence, strong enforcement and mediators trained to diffuse conflicts between rival gangs. It also provides some young people, who feel stuck in the drug trade, an opportunity to do something better with their lives through mentoring programs and job training.

The Haskell Center on Flint's Northside has reopened as is now home to a branch of The Boys and Girls Club of Greater Flint. Now 30-40 children each day, ages 7 to 17, have a safe place to come after school where they can learn and play. Through partnerships with groups like the Police Athletic League, Flint's youth now have an alternative to the streets and access to free mentoring and sports programs with positive role models. To volunteer at the center, call (810) 766-7144.

The Flint Police Department is hard at work every day under the leadership of Chief Lock. We have a public safety force of more than 120 dedicated men and women serving this community. On every shift we have a force of more than 20 officers on duty prepared to answer calls in every section of this city. Each day officers are assigned to general and directed patrols, community policing, special operations, traffic calls and youth cases across the city. Flint has the largest police force that we can afford, but they need the help of every community member if they are to do their jobs effectively.

The Walling administration is aggressively pursuing grant funds from local and federal sources to improve public safety in Flint. Flint currently has secured over \$6 million in grant dollars for the police

department and the fire department. These dollars fund 25 police officers and 39 fire fighters in the city. An additional grant is being pursued that would augment the Cease Fire Initiative and fund two more officers that would focus on two high-crime areas within the city. A \$1.2 million grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation was awarded to the city in June for community policing and awaits approval from the City Council. The Walling administration has submitted grant requests for an additional \$2.2 million to fund a community-based violence prevention demonstration program and a third grant, still pending, would bring in an additional \$300,000 over two years to fund new training and equipment for Flint police.

Breaking the long-term cycle of violent crime in our community will take a sustained, united effort. Our dedicated police officers work hard every day to make our community safe, but they cannot do it alone. Get informed and get involved today. By working together and trying new approaches to community policing and community action, we can build strong neighborhoods and safe streets one block at a time.