

Rock Creek Hills Citizens' Association

Kensington, MD 20895



www.rchca.org

October 18, 2009

The Honorable John McCarthy
State's Attorney for Montgomery County
Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office
50 Maryland Avenue, 5th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Subject: What can be done to address the major increase in car break-ins?

Dear Mr. McCarthy:

I am writing you on a matter of great concern to Rock Creek Hills Citizens' Association (RCHCA), a civic association that represents about 660 families in the Kensington area. Our concern is the major increase over the last few months in car break-ins, or theft from vehicles as it is referred to by the Police Department.

According to District 2 police statistics, during the five week period from September 1 – October 4, Rock Creek Hills alone has experienced **19 separate incidents** of thefts from cars. I recently have had several conversations with the police department on this issue. We fully understand our own obligations to assist the police by helping to prevent this crime as well as helping to catch perpetrators, including keeping car doors locked, keeping items of potential interest (e.g., electronic devices) out of sight, staying vigilant on behalf of ourselves and neighbors alike, and reporting all incidents. We also recognize that while increased undercover police surveillance is essential, police resources will always remain limited relative to the areas that must be covered.

In addition to this being a "crime of opportunity", however, we also understand that relatively few individuals, especially repeat offenders, figure quite disproportionately in the commission of these crimes. For example, we were informed that in July three suspects were arrested for involvement in committing over one hundred auto related crimes. Although not all of these crimes could be prosecuted due to a lack of evidence, search warrants at their homes in DC allowed the recovery of some property. Two of the suspects are currently in custody and awaiting trial. A third was convicted, sentenced to time served (60 days) and 18 months of probation. He was released September 29th. However, back in May one of these three was charged with several thefts from autos in Kensington. Most of these incidents were in the southern part of Bethesda.

Rock Creek Hills residents know that we are not alone in our being increasingly victimized by the perpetrators of this crime. We also recognize that first time offenders and especially juveniles are entitled to leniency, and support giving second chances as consistent with the prospect of successful rehabilitation. However, in order to for the justice system to become more effective on behalf of crime victims, we would like to make this request: **That the State's Attorney's Office recommend stiffer sentences for repeat offenders of theft from vehicles, and also work to achieve swifter trials for such alleged offenders.**

RCHCA wishes to voice its strong support for the County Police and the criminal justice system in trying to deal with this growing problem among the many types of crime that affect citizens. We look forward to working with the authorities to further efforts to successfully address this issue in the future.

Sincerely,

Joseph I. Rosenberg, President
Rock Creek Hills Citizens' Association