

Brightmoor residents join to fight crime

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More than 100 attend safety summit in Detroit to discuss concerns, form plans for prevention.

By Mark Hicks

The Detroit News

DETROIT — Anthony McCoy loves his home in the **Brightmoor** neighborhood on the city's west side, but wants more done to keep it safe.

In the years the 46-year-old hotel worker has lived there with his wife and daughter, he has known about prostitution and drug dealers nearby. And although there have been moves to curb their activities, McCoy wants a more unified crime-squashing approach with neighbors.

That's why McCoy joined more than 100 other residents Thursday for a public safety summit at Leland Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit.

"There's a possibility things will change," he said. "It's up to the community to make things happen."

Sponsored by the **Brightmoor** Alliance, Project Safe Neighborhoods, Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative and the Skillman Foundation, the summit allowed residents to air their concerns about issues affecting their approximately 4-square-mile area.

It also offered a glimpse into the work of Project Safe Neighborhoods, the U.S. Justice Department/Eastern District of Michigan program aimed at preventing gun and gang violence, as well as federal, state and local authorities.

"We're trying to close the gap between crime and safety," said the Rev. Jerome L. Warfield, chairman of the **Brightmoor** Alliance, which includes more than 40 advocacy neighborhood groups.

"Our main purpose is to come up with the top problems we see in **Brightmoor** and implement plans."

Summit attendees had a chance to quiz authorities — including William Temple, special agent in charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and U.S. Attorney Terrence Berg — about prevention efforts as well as initiatives. Their concerns also will be compiled for a report to identify target areas, Warfield said.

Alliance officials estimate that with Project Safe Neighborhoods' efforts and local authorities joining forces, overall crime in **Brightmoor**, including assaults and thefts, has declined more than 40 percent this year compared to 2008.

But residents voiced concerns about everything from reopening a police mini-station to garbage pickup. The area is home to about 18,000 residents.

Lucinda Hawkins, a longtime alliance member who also heads a community center, says she wants more projects to clean streets and prevent littering.

"We need to pay more attention," she said.

Detroit Police Sgt. Sam Jaafar, who heads Northwestern District Community Relations, told the audience about moves to bolster the presence of police. He also encouraged residents to continue talking to officials.

"They're the eyes and the ears of keeping a community safe," he said. "They're part of the formula."

Cynthia Wells, secretary of the community alliance, said she wants to see blighted homes demolished, add more playgrounds and transform vacant structures into training and education centers.

"That's the ultimate recycling," she said. "That's what the neighborhood needs."

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