

4651 U St.
Sacramento 95817

February 4, 2020

Councilmember Eric Guerra
Sacramento City Hall
915 I Street, 5th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Councilmember Guerra-

As residents of Elmhurst, we appreciate your responsiveness to neighborhood concerns about the break-in on U Street last Saturday by holding a neighborhood meeting last week on January 30 at the Coloma Center.

There were about forty people in attendance for a meeting with very short notice. This indicates the seriousness of this concern to our neighborhood.

Concerns raised included:

1. The delay and discrepancies in police response time as reported by the police and the victim. Delays were due to the call being routed to the CHP and then to the Sac PD dispatch center and the call being dropped. Captain Bassett said that he would not discuss discrepancies between SacPD's report and that of the victim. Captain Bassett blamed the delayed call routing and dropped call on technical difficulties due to the use of cell phones to call 911 (land lines apparently do not have these issues). Repeatedly it was asked how and when these technical issues will be corrected. In addition, Captain Bassett maintains the officer arrived seven minutes after receiving the call from dispatch. The victim has told neighbors that 15 minutes had elapsed when the officer arrived.
2. The victim reported to Martín Lozano (her landlord) that she was told by the police her call to 911 had been classified as "low priority", even though she had reported the perpetrator was inside her house.
3. Failure of the police to apprehend the suspect. Although this issue was raised a couple of times, the impression given by Captain Bassett was that it would not be discussed. Our neighborhood has certainly experienced substantial police searches, including with the use of helicopters. The victim reported to neighbors that the police actually made contact with the suspect but did not apprehend him (there are two clear pictures of the man captured by the officer's bodycam). As a neighborhood we clearly need to know why and how this man was able to get away and what was done at the time and what has been done since to try to apprehend him. It is important that residents have confidence in the police, and that requires transparency.
4. The victim also reported to her landlord and neighbors that she had to remind the officer to collect possible DNA samples (cigarette butts left on the patio). And it was left to the victim to canvas the block for possible images captured by video surveillance, which she was able to retrieve from a neighbor's security camera and submit to the police.
5. Role of the alley behind this house in allowing the suspect to enter the yard and then break into the house of the victim and allowing the suspect to escape. Questions were raised about whether the alley gates are designed to allow pedestrian access. Ways to improve alley security include removing the alleys (incorporating them into adjacent lots) or making them much more difficult for pedestrians to access.

6. Lack of street lighting. It was noted that property owners have voted down assessments to install streetlights. Other alternatives such as motion sensors on houses were also discussed.

7. Ways for residents to improve security through better locks, neighborhood watch, exterior lighting and cameras. It was noted that film from cameras can be shared with police and have been used to apprehend criminals.

Questions were also asked about the role of UCD police who do patrol the Elmhurst neighborhood as it is within a mile of the campus. Med Center employees and patients do go through Elmhurst. Some of these may have mental health issues and be released and cause problems in the neighborhood. Not mentioned in this context were other issues that have been brought to the City's attention, including traffic and parking problems caused by UCD employees and patrons and also littering. These speak to the importance of the role of UCDCM police in patrolling Elmhurst. In fact, people have called UCDCM police who have responded initially while waiting for Sac PD to respond. Better coordination between the two could help improve response time in Elmhurst.

To follow-up on neighborhood concerns, you said you would find out what is being done to address the technological problems related to calling 911 on a cell phone and why there are discrepancies between the victim's report and that of the police. After the meeting you said that you would also find out what efforts were made to apprehend the suspect, why police had contact with him and did not apprehend him, how long and in what manner they searched for him and what is going on now to try to find this person. You also said you would look into the alley issue and would be willing to discuss the process for getting streetlights.

An incident of a car break in was brought up at the meeting and the ENA has reported concerns about lack of police responsiveness to property theft. At this point, the response amounts to excuses, which does not address the problem.

We appreciate that you understand how important personal safety and property security is to all residents and we look forward to your follow through on these matters.

Sincerely,

Dale Dodson

Martín Lozano

Maggie Coulter

Cc Elmhurst Neighborhood Association