

City Councilman Unveils Plan To Combat Crime In The Third District

By Eric L. Wesson

City Councilman Troy Nash unveiled a plan that provides a wide range of proposed services to combat crime, stimulate economic development and build stronger neighborhoods within the Prospect

Corridor. Councilman Nash has been discussing this plan since 2000 after he had successfully completed a 144-hour community vigil at 39th and Prospect. Nash said the plans were advanced with the help of the City Manager Wayne Cauthe in light of the recent murders along Prospect. The plan calls for three separate initiatives funded by the City which includes funding to the Kansas City Mo., Police department who will receive funds to purchase four all-terrain vehicles and a mobile headquarters unit to be located near 39th and Prospect. Law enforcement officials are

often unable to apprehend suspects in their squad cars due to the alleys and abandoned lots found in the urban core. The vehicles are just another tool to use in an effort to increase their ability to combat crime.

The Rat On A Rat (ROAR) program, which Councilman Nash launched a few years ago, is funded and is aimed at cleaning up neighborhoods in the Prospect corridor. With a monitoring task force, there are incentives for those who report illegal dumpers and weekly ROAR patrols. The program is designed to make it difficult for these dumpers to pollute the inner city.

In addition to the environmental hazards posed by illegal dumping, the practice often encourages other criminal activity by providing cover and creating the false impression that neighborhood residents are apathetic about the future of their area.

Finally and to the delight of thousands of residents in the 3rd District, a massive weed abatement program will be launched. Tall weeds and vacant lots have been a major problem for the 3rd District for quite some time.

In addition to hindering economic development and serving as a health nuisance to neighbors,

exceptionally tall weeds can serve as a cover for criminal activity and impede law enforcement from capturing suspects.

"This is a wide-ranging plan to combat crime. The crimes that have been discovered over the past few weeks must not be tolerated. We have to do something about them and we can! By funding additional police activity, and cracking down on trails and practice that give criminals cover, we are striking back. The outraged citizens' voice have been heard. Our community is not going to simply watch as it is devastated, we will respond forcefully, and with the power of government," says Nash.

The City will provide the following additional services to address public safety concerns in an area roughly bounded by 21st on the north 31st on south, and Prospect Avenue east to Indiana Avenue.

- An additional mowing of land trust and city owned lots and alley ways within this area at an additional cost to the General Fund of approximately \$40,000.
- The targeted demolition of up to 15 critically vacant and dangerous buildings in the area at a cost of approximately \$80,000 from a federal grant.
- Four ATVs and a mobile police command center located at 39th and Prospect at a cost of \$32,000 from a federal grant to provide improved police response in the area.
- The fiscal year 2005-06 will recommend at least the following improvements:
 - Monthly mowing of all 1,200 plus lots under the Land Trust properties in the City at a cost of approximately \$300,000 which is a 350 percent increase over the current funding;
 - A doubling of current building demolition funding to prevent a backlog of dangerous buildings in need of demolition from recurring in the City.



SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT . . . City Manager Wayne Cauthe, sets the record straight at a press conference Wednesday in the 39th and Prospect area. Cauthe addressed issues raised by a television reporter concerning the lack of funding to cut weeds in vacant lots in the past. "I am not aware of what was done in the past and what that budget would allow. Under my administration and with this proposed budget, beginning next year, we will cut the vacant lots once a month," said Cauthe. -- CALL PHOTO GEORGE MURPHY