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Title: Killings spur new spending for prospect - City frees up \$164,000 for police work, cleanup in area where six bodies found

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Six murders in the Prospect Avenue corridor have galvanized city officials to pledge extra money for police work, weed and trash abatement, and building demolition.

City Manager Wayne Cauthen and Councilman Troy Nash announced Wednesday that they have identified about \$164,000 in this year's budget to address neighborhood complaints in the area generally bounded by 21st Street on the north, 31st Street on the south, Prospect Avenue on the west and Indiana Avenue on the east.

The bodies of four women were found recently in that area. Two other bodies were found just to the west of Prospect. Most of the victims were dumped near vacant lots or vacant buildings.

"Enough is enough," Nash said at the corner of 39th Street and Prospect, where a mobile police command center will be established. "This sends a message loud and clear that we care about Prospect."

Cauthen said excuses about the city's budget problems won't work. "The citizens have asked that the city step up," he said.

Most of the money will come from \$400,000 in this year's budget that was described as for "Prospect Corridor planning." Officials said the budget didn't spell out how that federal community development block grant money would be spent, so they have flexibility to use it to address neighborhood concerns.

"As a neighborhood, we're glad to see the money will be freed up," said Virginia Williams, president of the Santa Fe Area Council, which represents the area from 27th Street to Linwood Boulevard, Prospect to Indiana.

City officials said they will spend:

\$60,000 in federal grant money to demolish up to 15 extremely dangerous buildings in the area.

\$40,000 in parks department money to allow for one more mowing this fall of city-owned lots and alleyways in the area.

\$32,000 in federal money to purchase four all-terrain-vehicles that police can use to chase criminals in alleys and between houses, to try to deter drug dealing and other crime. Two shifts of officers will work out of a rented construction trailer at 39th and Prospect to provide improved police response.

About \$32,000 in federal money to launch an illegal dumping prevention program.

Nash first announced the so-called "Rat on a Rat (ROAR)" program in 2002, but he couldn't get the money to make it work. He also pledged to find money in 2003, but that didn't happen either. He said the funding is finally available to hire someone to coordinate the program that encourages people to report illegal dumping and to do weekly patrols.

Cauthen and Nash also pledged to budget an additional \$300,000 next year for monthly mowing of 1,200 vacant Jackson County Land Trust properties in the city, and to provide about \$550,000 for dangerous building demolition.

Cauthen acknowledged that weeds and dangerous buildings aren't to blame for the recent murders. But he said something clearly had to be done to assist the area.

Nash, who represents the 3rd District at-large, said he has tried to help the neighborhood since he was first elected in 1999, but has not been satisfied with the progress.

"It's been a constant uphill battle to get City Hall to pay attention to these economically disadvantaged areas," he said.

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First glance

Kansas City officials pledge to spend more money to clean up parts of a neighborhood where six bodies have been found.

A mobile police command center will be located near 39th Street and Prospect Avenue, equipped with ATVs .

As a systematic search of the area is conducted, police fear more victims could be found. Story, B-1

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