



SPECIAL EDITION

City, courts seek innovative solutions to neighborhood juvenile crime problem

At long last, a meeting was held with the top officials to confront head-on the outbreak of home and car burglaries by juvenile offenders. In the end, the city of Fort Lauderdale and the area's juvenile court administrators agreed to new initiatives to tackle this growing problem.

Police Chief Frank Adderley and City Manager Lee Feldman will draw up a detailed proposal to present to the four judges who oversee juvenile delinquency cases in Broward County within the next

60 days. They are looking into using GPS tracking devices and police officers to help monitor teens in the court system.



Judge Michael Orlando

This new initiative is the result of an unprecedented meeting in which I, along with Mayor Jack Seiler, met with all the Circuit Court judges in the Juvenile Delinquency Division – Judges Michael Orlando, Elijah Williams, Carlos Rebollo and Stacy Ross.

Also at the meeting were the police chief, the city manager and representatives of the State Attorney's Office, the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Public Defender's Office.

This a problem affecting neighborhoods across our city.

The latest police data shows home burglaries in the Middle River Terrace up 48 percent over last year. Almost a 100 homes in this small



Judge Stacy Ross

neighborhood were robbed in 2013, and residents there are understandably outraged. Many of those arrested are juveniles who are believed responsible for multiple break-ins. The juvenile justice system is established by the state, and teens face limited detention after arrest and frequently receive probation for offenses such as burglary.

The city can't change that. Only the Legislature in Tallahassee can do so. But what the city can do is create innovative ways to target this problem while working within the existing system.

We found the judiciary and court officials very responsive to our concerns. Some were unaware of the extent of the criminal activity



Judge Carlos Rebollo

committed by teens and want to help. All agreed that some form of GPS tracking would be beneficial. The city offered to use Law Enforcement Trust Fund dollars – money collected through the seizure of contraband and assets used in crimes – to buy the tracking devices. The judges could require certain juvenile offenders to wear the devices. The appropriate authorities

then could track them to ensure they are not committing more offenses.

Another idea that the chief and city manager will explore is assigning school resource officers to help the Department of Juvenile Justice undertake a special, intense level of supervision over the worse teen offenders.



Judge Elijah Williams

The police officers would work together with their DJJ counterparts to make sure those youth are in school and home when they are supposed to be and not out on the streets committing crime.

These steps are in addition to a new crime-fighting plan underway within the Police Department. The agency recently began a first-of-its-kind partnership with IBM to develop crime prevention tactics using advanced data analysis. Officers will be assigned to reduce criminal activity in high-crime areas based on the information gleaned from the data analysis.

The city is working hard to think outside of the box to take the fight against crime to the next level.

It's a difficult and complex task, but be assured Fort Lauderdale is determined to do all it can to rein in this teen crime spree and ensure that your neighborhood and your home are safe.

Sincerely,

Dean