

Email from a homeowner, July 2010 re: Vandalism/Damage

I believe that all of the accumulated damage to the various Crownridge, neighborhoods and vehicles could have paid for a considerable amount of video camera/dvd recorder equipment. Why not just make the investment, purchase/install the equipment, and put the vandals out of business?

Signed: Concerned Homeowner

Reply 8-15-2010

Dear Concerned Homeowner,

If you read all of the information below, I think you will readily see your type of inquiry has been examined from several angles over the past several years. To date, nothing I am aware of has changed the conclusions of those noted below.

In 2007 the Crownridge board approved a committee to research safety and security concerns. Although the committee had a larger number of homeowners who agreed to work on the committee, only a handful of approximately 5-6 residents ultimately were dedicated enough to complete the project. The findings of this committee were presented to the Crownridge membership in March 2008 at the annual meeting. You may view their findings on Crownridge's website (www.crownridgehoa.com).

Click on the link entitled "**Community Safety.**" Then click on "Safety and Security Committee Report posted 3-7-08.

Following are facts re: other HOAs that have cameras. Some of these comments/conclusions are from their own board representative. While some of these facts are a few years old, they still are facts. The quoted costs are likely to have increased since compiling these comments.

One community off of 1604 is gated, has several cameras including infrared and has a roving patrol. My point of contact said even if you do everything, you will never stop somebody who is determined to be a problem. There are no statistical data available to show increased security measures have impacted criminal activity. You must correlate the specific crime to the video. Circumstantial evidence is irrelevant. Picking up a license plate is NOT proof enough. The criminal activity itself has to be captured to prove the crime was committed by the suspects.

All of the safety measures noted (several cameras including infrared,

and roving patrol) have never had an impact on burglaries or robberies in their neighborhood. In two years, they have never been able to use the cameras/recordings to ID someone. Every step with cameras requires a volunteer and money. They still have egging of homes despite the safety measures noted. Packages still get stolen. Homes still get burglarized.

One advantage would be to ID a suspect if the suspect damages the gate. Otherwise, the cameras have never worked with anything unrelated to the gate.

During the first week, the newly installed cameras were stolen. Last thing recorded was the person's face. Police report was filed. Five days later police determined there was not conclusive evidence to show he walked away with the cameras; therefore, since a second camera was not aimed and filming the activity of the first camera(s), nothing was done.

True, the community feels better having the cameras but it is a false sense of security. They did go 8-9 months without incident then had a rash of incidents one spring; it was all committed by legal entry by a resident teenager who was a member of the pool and who was the son of wealthy parents. His activity was never identified by the cameras or patrol; he was apprehended during a burglary in Stone Oak. Stolen items were later found in his personal home. When asked what gates prevent, his immediate answer was "They prevent nothing."

One person has threatened a lawsuit over the cameras and filming but no action to date. Privacy issues are a big concern. What happens if you have cameras and a resident thinks their spouse is having an affair; they could petition the tapes. Where is your liability then?

The contact said neighbors just "don't give a damn" regardless of the number of requests/signs. Why pay more for people who do not take responsibility. **He added that mailing lists (e.g., blast emails) have helped the most with crime.**

A second HOA contact and a HOA manager said they have 2 wide cameras (one for visitors; one for residents), 1 or 2 license and night cameras, one at the exit, and several at sports court/pool. Cameras are 12-15 feet off of the ground. Stolen cameras cannot be reconnected or reused. Sun can blind out the picture.

If electricity goes out, so do the cameras. They do not necessarily reset or reboot automatically; you may not know they are not functioning properly. Must be rebooted by a volunteer or company (e.g., Dyezz out of Austin or Quality Access). Operation must be verified at least twice daily. They do not reset properly after electrical storms; their cameras were not

working for 1.5 months and they did not know it.

Even with cameras that ID cars/license plates, you still must connect them to a specific incident. The license plate is not enough; it does not confirm who was in or driving the car or who committed the crime. Cameras are useful about 20% of the time. Cameras give a false sense of security just like gates do. Cameras are only a deterrent.

Costs include installation cost plus many times revisions are needed--also costly. Their residents complained about wasted money with the needed revisions. Cameras require a dedicated internet line. Every step requires a volunteer and money.

Maintenance costs were running about \$50/month for company to check all the monitors twice daily to verify the cameras were on-line/website. You must have a volunteer to maintain and monitor the cameras.

If you need to identify a person captured by the cameras, how do you ask 700 homes? If the person is legitimate, then you have to deal with that reaction. Viewing the tapes is not an immediate process. If you hire an outside company to monitor, the costs are about \$150/month. You generally need a 3rd party to record and monitor to avoid legal issues, e.g., infidelity issues. Even with a monitoring company, LOTS of volunteer time usually is needed to review the recordings.

Cameras almost never ID the vandals but only ID the vehicles so it is good for damage to common property, not personal property.

I would like to also share with you the following facts:

A community comparable in size and income to Crownridge has employed off duty SAPD 24/7 for years at a cost of approximately \$200,000/year. In 2008 the reported crime statistics (hard statistics, not number of calls) were reviewed for all of 2006 and for January-August 2007 for said community and for Crownridge. (This was public info found on SAPD website at that time; it is now restricted.) Overall, the statistics were strikingly similar except Crownridge did have a higher number of vehicle burglaries. (Until residents place their vehicles in the garage or remove items that appear to be of value, this will continue to be a problem. More succinctly said...Leaving items in your vehicle is like leaving leftovers outside on your deck...some varmint will come to feed on it and they will keep returning until you stop supplying them. If you insist on leaving items in your car, you might consider leaving the door unlocked to save yourself a broken window.) In

said community's 2008 newsletter, the front page lead article was titled "Vandalism-A Growing Problem." At this year's annual meeting (2010), I presented their crime statistics for January 2010. Again they were comparable to ours--even with off duty SAPD 24/7.

The Dominion is the nearby upscale community that has manned security gates 24/7/365 and roving patrols. Even they have had multiple home and car burglaries.

In sharing this information, please do not think I am discounting your concerns in any way; the purpose of sharing this is to highlight the city-wide issue with vandalism regardless of crime prevention measures taken.

So, Concerned Homeowner, to go back to your original belief (all of the accumulated damage to the various Crownridge neighborhoods and vehicles could have paid for a considerable amount of video camera/dvd recorder equipment), you're right but that does not mean the cameras/recordings would have recouped the outlay of expense or reimbursed any of the damage. To examine your second belief (Why not just make the investment, purchase/install the equipment, and put the vandals out of business?), after reading all of the above, do you think that is true?

Crownridge Board