



PRESS RELEASE

City of Saratoga & Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office



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For Immediate Release

November 17, 2016

City of Saratoga Making Strides to Reduce Property Crime

The City of Saratoga prides itself on being a safe, family-oriented community. However, over the last few years, the City has seen a rise in property crimes. Consequently, the Saratoga City Council has been working on strategies to tackle the issue and those efforts are now coming to fruition.

"I hope that one day none of our residents experience the feelings of violation and loss of security that come with being the victim of a property crime," said Saratoga Mayor Manny Cappello. "To that end, I and the rest of the City Council have prioritized public safety with the aim to once again make Saratoga the safest city in California and the nation."

To reduce property crime, the City Council is implementing a strategy that aligns the community, law enforcement, and the City's elected leaders. "Our collaborative efforts are already producing results," said Santa Clara County Sheriff Laurie Smith. "Over the summer, property crimes in Saratoga peaked in June with 19 residential burglaries, clearly indicating a need for us to focus our efforts. This dropped down to 2 residential burglaries in September, which still indicates to us that more work needs to be performed. By continuing to work together I'm sure we can maintain this progress to address property crime concerns."

As part of this approach, the City Council adopted an ordinance that would require locking mailboxes for all new homes on November 16, 2016 – making Saratoga the first city in California to proactively address mail theft by requiring locking mailboxes for new homes.

The ordinance comes after the City saw the highest rates of identity theft, forgery, and fraud crimes in 2015 compared to the last 10 years. The new requirement for locking mailboxes is a critical step in reducing these crimes as identity theft, forgery, and fraud crimes often begin as mail theft. The Federal Trade Commission estimates that approximately 400,000 U.S. residents had their mail stolen and subsequently became victims of identity theft in 2015. Saratoga's new law will reduce opportunity for mail theft and make the City a less appealing target for criminals. Residents who have not already installed a locking mailbox at their home are encouraged to have packages mailed to work or take advantage of services like Amazon Locker during the upcoming holiday season.

In early 2016, the City Council also took a closer look at opportunities to engage residents as partners in reducing property crime and tasked a City Commission with identifying opportunities to work with residents to reduce property crime. This led to a joint meeting with Saratoga's Neighborhood Watch groups on October 19. Close to 200 residents attended the meeting to

register their Neighborhood Watch group with the City and learn more about keeping their home and community safe. There are now more than 30 registered Neighborhood Watch groups in Saratoga. Roughly half of the City is now within an active Neighborhood Watch group. A map of the City's Neighborhood Watch groups is available online at www.saratoga.ca.us/stayingsafe

These neighbors who have organized themselves will play a key role in the success of the City's efforts to decrease property crime. Nobody is better equipped to spot unusual or suspicious activity than the City's own residents. When residents see something and immediately call 911 they can help stop and prevent crimes.

Additionally, the City Council established an annual Neighborhood Watch Grant Program. Through the program, registered Neighborhood Watch groups would be able to request a grant of up to \$300 once per year on a first-come, first-served basis. Neighborhoods can decide how they would like to use the money. Examples of how the grant may be used include annual block parties, flyers, or informational materials. The grant application process will open before the end of the year. The primary goal of the new grant program is to help keep Neighborhood Watch groups organized for years to come.

"I hope our efforts send a clear message to criminals – we're looking out for each other in Saratoga and we won't be an easy target," said Mayor Manny Cappello.

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Saratoga City Council Meeting with Neighborhood Watch Groups – October 19, 2016