

Community Focus Statement E: Improve public safety.

Action Statement E.1: Establish a neighborhood watch program that can be implemented throughout the communities.

E

Benchmarks: Neighborhood watch programs are established for at least 50 percent of the Crest Forest communities' residential areas, with each program continuing to function for at least five years from its inception. Ensure each program has established leadership that meets regularly (at least once a quarter), and meets with representatives from the Sheriff's Department at least once annually.

Champion: Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

Estimated Cost: \$500–\$5,000



Neighborhood Crime Watch sign in Wrightwood, CA. Photo source: Michael Baker International

A neighborhood watch program in the Crest Forest communities is a way to help keep the communities safe by getting residents involved in crime prevention efforts. Participating residents keep watch on their neighbors and the neighborhood, decreasing the opportunities for people to commit a crime without being observed, which in turn makes the area less desirable to potential lawbreakers. Community members also promptly report suspicious activities to law enforcement officials, who can intervene and potentially stop a crime from occurring. The goal of a neighborhood watch program is not to catch criminals or to change their behavior, but to reduce the number of situations and locations where a crime could happen. The Sheriff's Department will assist in establishing a neighborhood watch program in the Crest Forest communities by meeting with the local residents. Petty crime, theft, and crimes related to the arrest and release program are current safety concerns within the Crest Forest communities. A Neighborhood Watch Program has been in effect for many years. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department presented an alternative for the neighborhood watch program for the area that should be considered further. Their recommendation is to develop incentives for online security programs with real time web accessible cameras allowing deputies to respond better prepared and get real time information. With property signage, it may also deter vandalism and other minor crimes.

Many strategies can help increase the effectiveness of a future neighborhood watch program in the Crest Forest communities. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department can assist communities in the area in starting and maintaining neighborhood watch programs by supplying critical resources and training for program participants. Homeowners associations and other existing community groups in the Crest Forest communities can provide a framework for neighbors to get together and communicate to organize and grow a neighborhood watch program. Participants can host events such as cleanups and small-scale renovation activities, making areas nicer and more attractive. Signs posted around the communities can emphasize that a neighborhood watch program is in place, raising awareness of the program and possibly deterring potential lawbreakers. Neighborhood watch programs can

also act with a unified voice to encourage residents and businesses to take action and make communities safer, such as by installing better outdoor lighting or rehabilitating decayed public spaces.

For neighborhood watch programs in the Crest Forest communities to be effective, they should involve members from all segments of the community. Studies have shown that neighborhood watch programs are best at reducing crime when they involve a wide spectrum of community members who are willing to make long-term commitments to the effort. Having a variety of community members involved also helps the program to be more inclusive and representative of the entire community, making it more legitimate and valid. Involving children and teenagers, adults, and elderly residents helps ensure that more neighborhood safety issues are covered.

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Conduct a kickoff, informational meeting to determine interest, assign volunteers, identify areas of concern in the community, and other appropriate start-up activities. Conduct outreach activities and recruit residents to serve on a neighborhood watch committee.	Champion Community groups, homeowners associations, Sheriff's Department	Months 1 – 3	National Crime Prevention Council: Starting a Neighborhood Watch http://www.ncpc.org/resources/files/pdf/neighborhood-safety/nwstart.pdf
2. For each neighborhood where a program will be established, select a resident to serve as the neighborhood watch chair.	Neighborhood watch committees	Month 4	US Department of Justice: Neighborhood Watch Manual https://www.bja.gov/Publications/NSA_NW_Manual.pdf
3. Establish lines of communication between all neighborhood watch committees in the Crest Forest communities.	Neighborhood watch committees	Month 5	San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department http://cms.sbcounty.gov/sheriff/home.aspx
4. Solicit volunteers from the community to support neighborhood watch activities.	Neighborhood watch committees	Month 5	San Bernardino County Public Works (for sign installation) http://cms.sbcounty.gov/dpw/home.aspx
5. Establish partnerships with the Sheriff's Department for continued training, information sharing, and resources.	Neighborhood watch committees	Month 6	
6. Post signs notifying people of a neighborhood watch program.	Neighborhood watch committees	Month 6	
7. Conduct regular training sessions, information sharing, and meetings.	Neighborhood watch committees	On-going	
8. Monitor the effectiveness of neighborhood watch programs, and make revisions to program operations as needed.	Neighborhood watch committees	On-going	