

## Richard J. Brueckner's vision: Safe, clean neighborhoods are always an 'inside job'

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Richard Brueckner an assistant states attorney and Safe Streets prosecutor for Wicomico County. / Staff photo by Todd Dudek

A safe neighborhood grows from the inside out and cannot be maintained solely from the outside.

The first step is a desire — and a decision — to become safer. Once residents have made that commitment, a great deal can be accomplished.

Once a neighborhood has decided to address its crime problems, key partnerships are helpful. Partnering with police, State's Attorneys Office, Neighborhood Code and Compliance, and Parole & Probation agencies can help residents regularly communicate their security needs and how police might more effectively meet them.

The Safe Streets Program in Salisbury offers such a forum on the third Thursday of each month.

Community meetings allow concerned residents to meet with law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, community organizers and local businesses to address neighborhood issues as a team.

Here are 10 great ways to make your neighborhood safer:

**Improved lighting:** Yard lights are easy to install and relatively inexpensive. Turn them on early and keep them lit late.

**Neighborhood Watch:** Be amazed at how much safer you can make your neighborhood.

- **Plant flowers:** We protect what we love, and crooks perceive a cared-for neighborhood to be a watched one.
- **Remove all graffiti:** Find alternative uses for places where graffiti shows up.
- **Organize regular outdoor activities:** A neighborhood that is active outside will make bad guys wary about revisiting the neighborhood. Get loud and have fun.
- **Keep it clean and trimmed:** A clean neighborhood is a safer one. Keep trees trimmed back and high. Would you break into a home with a freshly cut lawn? Didn't think so.

- **Create an identity:** Define your neighborhood and stake it out. A great way to create a unified look is to give it a name and put up signage. Make it obvious and well-kept. First impressions are important.
- **Jump into a police car:** Do a ride-along and encourage your neighbors to do the same. Don't forget your camera. Ask your host officer to show you areas that need to be addressed; bring pictures to your next neighborhood cookout.
- **Talk to your police department:** Document criminal activity. Identify criminals. The U.S. Department of Justice keeps saying it is a small group of people committing most of the crimes in a small area. Know your facts and use them to reduce crime.
- **Walk, walk, walk:** People scare off bad guys; the more people out walking in broad daylight, the better. The more really big guys out walking great danes out at night, well, you get the idea.

**Richard J. Brueckner is an assistant state's attorney and Safe Streets prosecutor for Wicomico County.**