

## SAPD SURVEY: Traffic an issue for north side residents

### 19th-Chadbourne-Fourth area wants safety

By Jennifer Rios

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SAN ANGELO, Texas — Roy Hernandez has had positive experiences with the San Angelo Police Department: their response time, their attitudes and the way they're involved with his children's schools.

Hernandez said he feels the presence of officers; one lives on the same block, and others train regularly at the old Lincoln Middle School. He appreciates them going into schools like Bradford and Lee where his children attend, and he would like to see even more — lessons on their staying out of trouble and focusing in school.

If he had any complaint it would be traffic enforcement, specifically at 40th and Bowie streets, where he's reported street racing and has seen cars ignore stop signs, putting neighborhood children at risk of getting hurt.

Hernandez said violent crime or gang-related activity aren't safety concerns for him or his family.

"We've been at the residence for more than five years," he said. "We don't really see those activities."

Before police divided the city into sectors, the area north of 19th Street along Chadbourne Street, where that dividing line dropped to near Fourth Street, was labeled as Beat 33 on the department's Police Satisfaction Survey.

The survey, conducted recently by the department and Angelo State University's Community Wellness, Engagement and Development program, was meant to give residents a chance to voice their concerns, criticisms and compliments and express what they'd like to see in the future.

Responses were broken down into six categories measuring residents' concerns, fears, their satisfaction with officers, the department, crime prevention techniques and what services they see as essential.

For Beat 33, traffic enforcement and drug-related crime ranked high on a list of concerns. Like the other areas, the beat showed little interest in services such as the narcotics hotline, the police website and online reporting. When it came to their satisfaction with officers, its score was close to the citywide average, a positive score on the whole.

Sgt. Fred Dietz Jr., who supervised patrol on the north side of San Angelo for years, said the major problems the area faces are home and vehicle burglaries as well as domestic disturbances, crimes common for mainly residential areas where most people work during the day.

Respondents to the survey showed drug-related crime was an issue by ranking it a 0.86 on a -1 to 1 scale, a higher score indicating more concern.

Dietz said that because the majority of burglaries are committed by people who need money for drugs, residents may work under the assumption that more drug deals result from those burglaries.

He said police receive calls from residents across the city who suspect drug deals because of high traffic, with different vehicles, at a particular house.

"That's really everywhere," he said.

Flora Garcia, Hernandez's mother-in-law who lives a few miles from him, hears rumors of drug dealers in the area but has no firsthand information. Although people on all sides of her have been burglarized, she has not been a victim in the 42 years she and her husband have lived at their house.

Like Hernandez, her frustration mainly lies with people disregarding traffic rules.

From her front yard and porch, Garcia said she has seen cars disregard a nearby stop sign and fly around the corner to her street, one where she takes her grandchildren walking in the mornings. A house on the corner has had its fence run over at least half a dozen times, she said.

"People are just careless, I guess," she said. "They run the stop sign like it wasn't even there."

Lt. Les Bird, commander of Sector 1, which encompasses the area north of Houston Harte, said he was surprised by the concern for traffic enforcement since the department sends officers across the city for that specific purpose.

"When I drive around I see what these people are talking about — the red light running, no signals — and all of that leads to more accidents," he said. "I know we work a lot of traffic. I guess we just can't work it enough."

With three or four officers patrolling Sector 1 on a given shift, he said, it's impossible for officers be in several places at once.

Because the sector borders several others, officers can be pulled from different neighborhoods to assist in either daily patrols or for certain calls.

Bird said he's heard that people want more community programs, but the last time he held a neighborhood meeting at the Northside Recreation Center, only a handful of people showed up.

For those who show up he gives tips such as not advertising your new big screen television by leaving the box outside and how the community can help by being the

department's eyes and ears.



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