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# **Enough is Enough!**

## **A Plan to Restore Order to the Streets of Milwaukee**

Whether Mayor Tom Barrett chooses to admit it or not, Milwaukee is facing a public safety crisis. You know it, I know it, and most of the State knows it. It has even reached the point where the entire nation is beginning to know about it, too.

Almost on a daily basis another life is snuffed out on our city streets. The number of shootings is going through the roof. Armed robberies seem out of control. In some neighborhoods the thugs have simply taken over. To large segments of the community, disorder seems to be the norm. Even in neighborhoods once immune to such problems, we're beginning to see increases in property crimes, disorder, truancy, and curfew violations. Our police force is spread thin, leaving some neighborhoods with a lack of police presence.

Efforts are underway to bring about a renaissance in Milwaukee. Developers have proposed a billion dollars for new developments downtown alone. I acknowledge and applaud these efforts. And yet our City is more than just a downtown. If our downtown is the heart of the community, then our neighborhoods are surely its backbone. That backbone is breaking under the weight of rising crime and disorder. Steps need to be taken now to turn this situation around.

Therefore, I am proposing a plan. This plan entails broken windows/quality of life policing, area saturation patrols, curfew and truancy enforcement, crime impact zones and much more. It is a plan that is by no means complicated. It does not waste time and money on study groups, commissions, or overpaid consultants. It has been put together with the cooperation of Sheriff David Clarke and retired Milwaukee Police Captain Glenn Frankovis. It employs proven policing techniques and a great deal of common sense. The same common sense, I'm sorry to say, much of our City government is lacking. Aspects of this plan have proven successful in other cities across the nation. It can be successful here if our local leaders have the guts to implement it.

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**First and foremost, we need to take back our streets.** We can no longer tolerate or excuse any level of disorder in any part of our City. Laws – all laws – need to be aggressively enforced. And once those officers do their duty, elected officials and this entire community need to back them up.

This type of policing is aggressive and proactive. Whether we call it “broken windows policing” or “quality of life policing” the fact is, laws were made for a reason—every one of them. They need to be enforced to insure an orderly and peaceful society. Often by responding to “the little things,” officers are able to gain information about more serious crimes in the area and prevent them.

In addition, we must go beyond merely issuing tickets for blatant violations of the law. **Summary arrests need to be made and violators need to go to jail.** Until the message is sent, loud and clear, that people will be held accountable for their actions and inconvenienced as a consequence, little will change. Let’s face it. Most violent crime is committed by the same people who loiter, drive defective cars, engage in disorderly conduct and accumulate warrants. Quality of life policing specifically targets these individuals by seeking them out and summarily arresting them for any and all ordinance and State statute violations.

We need to realize that the Police Department can’t do it alone. The need for decent people to stand up, contact the police, and provide information regarding illegal activity is greater now than ever before. This intelligence gathering is critical to the success of any proactive policing effort. Once the information is secured, **area saturation patrol units at each police district need to be utilized.** This allows the district Captain the flexibility of deploying a “strike force” sufficiently manned to address those in the community who are intimidating the good people in their neighborhoods.

We need to **declare crime-ridden areas as impact zones.** Areas experiencing a jump in violence, squalor or disorder qualify. A massive Police presence is warranted. Everything from foot and bike cops to tactical enforcement officers flood these areas. In addition, other city resources need to be brought to bear, from sanitation to building inspection and everything in between. If an area looks like a slum, people living in it behave accordingly.

In addition we need to **declare war on curfew and truancy violations.** Gangs of young people roaming the streets night and day are offering nothing to this community but heartache and intimidation. The above mentioned policing strategies can be deployed to address this problem but additional manpower is needed. The Mayor’s proposal to hand out tickets for these violations is a joke. These individuals need to be held accountable, inconvenienced, and arrested. And if appropriate, so do their parents. Parental accountability must be the hallmark of expecting better behavior from our kids.

Much of this plan cannot be accomplished without additional officers. MPD is dangerously understaffed at the district level. **Steps need to be taken to reorganize the department and to do it now.** Officers assigned to desk duty need to be reassigned (at least one day a week) to street patrol. This should include the entire command staff, from the Chief on down, all in an effort to improve productivity and increase accountability.

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In addition, *we can no longer tolerate the “barning” of squads.* (That is to say, squad cars remain unmanned because of a shortage in district level officers, resulting in areas of the city receiving a lesser degree of patrol). Taxpayers deserve better.

One strategy to quickly add law enforcement efforts to our streets is to *have the State Patrol assume freeway patrol responsibilities in Milwaukee County.* This would free up dozens of Sheriff’s deputies to augment Milwaukee Police efforts. I’ve called for this in the past and realize that it requires the approval of both State and County government. But let’s explore the possibility.

Additionally, I believe the *deployment for this summer of fifty to seventy-five Military Police officers to the City of Milwaukee is critical* to filling the manpower shortage and effectively implementing this plan. I am not advocating that tanks roll down Wisconsin Avenue. The reality is that with the level of violence in Milwaukee, it is not uncommon to have dozens of officers tied up for hours at one crime scene. Those officers are unavailable to respond to calls for service and to proactively patrol our streets. That’s why people can wait hours for a squad. We simply need the additional resources. Some will argue that the Guard should only be used for civil disturbances. Well, if the chaos we call cruising doesn’t qualify as a civil disturbance, I don’t know what does. If we don’t engage the help of the Guard, the events this summer will be the final indicator of whether these MP’s could have been a benefit to the City.

I continue to reiterate my *call for a fourth police class to be started in 2007.* The Milwaukee Police Department has an authorized strength of 2,150. Currently we are hovering around 1,800 officers. To effectively maintain order on the streets of Milwaukee, the Police department needs the necessary resources. The reality, however is that even if a fourth police class is started in late 2007, the recruits wouldn’t be out on street duty for almost a year.

## **Other Steps That Need to Be Taken**

We simply cannot afford another summer where cruising depletes much needed police resources. *Cruising* has been a problem in our community for far too long. The last several years it has degenerated into complete chaos. Until the police clamp down hard, the problem will continue. Officers need to *summarily arrest* individuals involved and *tow their vehicles.* And the courts need to back the police up.

Milwaukee struggles with the problem of recidivism (offenders who are prosecuted, released, and go on to commit more crimes). Repeat offenders drain limited criminal justice resources. Probation and parole officers need to *increase the frequency of home checks for weapons and drug paraphernalia to insure compliance with court orders.* Anyone failing a drug or alcohol test or found with a weapon should immediately be taken into custody. Our DA, courts, and probation and parole need to insure that these individuals go back to jail.

Along with cleaning up crime, *we need to clean our streets.* Environment affects behavior – if a community looks like a slum, the people living in it behave accordingly. Many of our streets are absolutely filthy. Individuals assigned to community service or non-violent inmates from the House of Correction could help with clean up efforts.

Disorder problems at MPS are out of hand. Students are expelled from school for bad behavior and sent to another school where the cycle starts all over again. *Reform schools need to be created.* Let's put all our bad apples in one bunch so that we can give the decent kids a chance.

Mirroring the Downtown Public Service Ambassadors, *Urban Ambassadors need to be deployed in our City's neighborhoods and business strips.* They can go a long way towards neighborhood revitalization by acting as eyes and ears for the Police as well as addressing litter and graffiti.

I often hear the need to *engage the faith-based community.* I couldn't agree more. But they need to know what precise role they can play. Churches with their own school systems need to increase the number of schools in Milwaukee. This continual downsizing of faith based schools, especially those in the inner city, needs to stop. In addition, churches need to meaningfully engage individuals recently released from prison to insure a successful transition into society. And finally, churches need to engage their members in what I'm referring to as the "Prince of Peace Corps". Through this faith based initiative, corps members not only take ownership of the blocks surrounding their congregation but also the block each member lives on. Ownership can mean anything from calling the police when necessary, to forming a block watch, to doing door-to-door efforts, to organizing neighborhood clean-ups.

In an effort to improve our public safety efforts, we are left with the options outlined above. These will likely require some costly adjustments to our police budget including massive overtime hours. But due to poor decisions made in the past, these are the few choices we are left with.

I reiterate my call for the *Mayor to form a delegation* of local leaders, business owners, citizens, and social service organizations to go to Madison and call on the Governor for assistance. Milwaukee needs help and we can't continue to overburden the property tax payers.

I have no doubt that this plan will have its naysayers. There will be people that think aspects of this plan go too far. But the silence from our City leaders is deafening. I am offering this plan to the Mayor, my colleagues, and any interested citizens. If anyone has a better, more comprehensive plan, let's hear it.

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