

Independence Block Watch

www.tussingblockwatch.com

April 10, 2008

City of Columbus Administrator of Transportation
Attn: Patricia Austin
109 N. Front St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL

Re: Independence Park
Address: 3075 Arrowsmith Dr.
Columbus, Ohio 43068

Dear Ms. Austin,

In keeping with the attached letter, a copy is being presented to you on behalf of the Independence Village residents. In an effort to take back their community and to lower crime in this area, we are respectfully requesting that the following petition please be reviewed and considered.

In a joint effort between the residents and members of the Independence Block Watch, the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department, and the Columbus Department of Transportation it is our goal that the entire community in a collective effort will strongly benefit from the expressed changes to the Independence Park area.

A copy of this petition was presented to the Parks and Recreation Director, Mark Young at the Independence Block Watch meeting on April 8, 2008 and we are inviting you to please join us in our efforts to cut back on crime.

Should you have any questions regarding this petition, please feel free to contact myself, or the Community Liaison for the 14th Precinct, Officer James Poole at (614) 645-1414 or via email at jpoole@columbuspolice.org.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Independence Block Watch Coordinator

Enclosures:

1. Petition Letter – 2 pages
2. Signature Pages – 13 pages (originals available upon request)
3. Map of Independence Park and Surrounding Streets – 1 page

cc: Officer Poole,
Community Liaison Officer – Precinct 14

Independence Block Watch

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter serves as the voice of the Independence Village community of Columbus, Ohio. It represents our collective requests in regards to issues plaguing Independence Park, which is located at 3075 Arrowsmith Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43068, and the courts adjacent to Independence Park, on Tildon Lane, Stockton Lane, Yorkdale Lane, Earlington Lane, and Dewbourne Drive.

The Independence Village community hereby requests that the City of Columbus, Parks and Recreation Division change the current park hours to the new hours of dawn to dusk, or one hour after dusk, whichever is more appropriate. It is also requested that the park grounds be evaluated for additional lighting to improve nighttime visibility and safety.

The community also requests that the Ohio Department of Transportation post signs at the aforementioned courts, which will limit parking to mirror the new park hours of dawn to dusk.

We are respectfully requesting that you take the following issues, which have become a source of major concern to the Independence Village community, into consideration when making your decisions.

As a result of the rise in crime, the residents of Independence Village, other concerned citizens of the nearby Park Place West community, and various city officials, all met to discuss what could be done to tackle these issues. Many solutions have come as a result of that meeting, but can only make a difference if we all work together.

The ability of the residents to continue enjoying Independence Park is in serious jeopardy. There has been an alarming rise of residence witnessing drug deals, alcohol abuse, graffiti, vandalism, curfew violations, trash dumping, firearms discharged, arson, disturbing the peace, driving through the park, and even driving across the pedestrian bridge. Many, if not most of these crimes, take place after nightfall. In the past years the residents of Independence Village and those directly surrounding the Independence Park have made numerous calls for service to the Columbus Police Department in relation to these issues. However, due to so many issues, and not knowing which way to turn, residents and police have found it difficult to battle the crimes affecting this area.

Changing the park hours of operation to "dawn to dusk", it will not generally affect the surrounding residents in a negative way, since many do not venture into the park after dark as it is. However, changing the hours of operation will establish restrictions that will leave no doubt when the park closes even for those not carrying a watch.

In addition to the park's hours, improved lighting will help deter illegal activity in the park and improve visibility, allowing those who witness illegal activity to provide better descriptions of suspects. The lighting will allow law enforcement the visibility to identify and apprehend suspects. Not only will it help prevent crime, but it will improve the overall safety of the area.

Along with the change in park hours and improved lighting, restricting the hours of parking on the courts that are attached to the park will greatly assist officers on patrol by giving them the ability to question and search anyone who may be parked in this area during restricted hours. Residents, who live next to these courts, have been witnesses to numerous drug deals occurring on these courts. Residents fear retaliation from reporting these crimes as well as the possibility of gun fire in the area. The very lives of these citizens are in danger.

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These actions together, will greatly help stem the rise in crime previously mentioned as well as improve the safety and security of the residents surrounding Independence Park. It is past time for the community of Independence Village and the City of Columbus to take back control of this community from the criminals.

We all understand the frustration that the Columbus Parks and Recreation department must feel, as they are the ones who have to fix all of the damages left behind by vandals. With the Parks and Recreation, the Department of Transportation, continued police presence to include the area's community liaison officer, continued community involvement in the new Independence Block Watch, and the need for narcotic and under cover officers currently being evaluated, we feel that with time and perseverance, we can all make a great impact on this area.

The residents of Independence Village, the surrounding community, and those officers who patrol the area, sincerely appreciate all consideration and effort on the part of the City of Columbus to help us in our endeavor to make Independence Park and our community a safer place.