

## Imagine This!



### Michigan Chronicle Article

Imagine living in a city where the unemployment rate is double the national average, the foreclosure rate is among the highest in the country, there is a budget deficit of nearly \$200 million and the crime rate is triple the national average.

Those of us who live in Detroit do not have to imagine. It is our daily reality. The crime epidemic is a fact of life and death. The culture of crime and violence we experience every day is not an aberration. In almost every conceivable way, the perception matches the reality. And failure of the city administration to immediately provide a clear plan to stem the tide means residents will be at significant risk for the foreseeable future.

I can't envision a more important quality of life issue. Crime and the fear of crime depress property values, resulting in escalating abandonment and blight.

With an already inconceivable number of properties off the tax rolls we cannot afford to continue the trend. The rate of abandonment will surely exceed the rate of demolition – for a number of reasons. However, much of the foreclosures and desertion can be attributed to Detroit's tough times and hard streets.

Putting this sinking ship on a stable course starts with better decision-making at the highest level of government. The Police Department is half the size it was even 15 years ago. Up to 35 officers leave the department every month thru attrition. Vacancies are not being filled at the same rate, partly because of budget concerns. We have the lowest number of officers on the streets in over three decades. Safety must be a top priority. There simply aren't enough officers on the job to answer the desperate call of citizens.

Currently, there are at least 14 officers in the executive protection unit for the mayor and eight officers in the executive protection unit for City Council. Council President Monica Conyers is often seen with two executive protection officers shadowing her. The desire of these officials to insulate themselves from the prevailing violence should not be at the expense of the rest of us. It's hard to imagine that some perceived threat against them is more pressing than the daily

attacks against law abiding citizens on Detroit's streets. We find ourselves mired in a situation where much is needed and little is being done. The city doesn't devote enough resources to public safety and police resources are not used effectively. Missing is a comprehensive management /deployment strategy highlighted by putting enough cops where crime is occurring.

Detroit's budget deficit puts us in a bad economic predicament. Next year could be a watershed for the city. The administration and City Council must realign budget priorities in favor of hiring more cops. After all, the first responsibility of any government is to ensure the safety of its residents. A government that cannot perform this basic task probably can't do anything else well, either.

Our reality is a city in economic ruin, extreme job losses, a heightened climate of fear and hordes of residents making their exit to safety outside the city limits.

Now just imagine a city with a balanced budget, where the community and police work together to keep the streets safe. Imagine a city where crime and violence is not an accepted part of life and its safe for children to play in the parks. Imagine a city where public servants do just that—serve the public instead of themselves. Now imagine we, the electorate, has

stopped imagining and  
started working and voting to  
create a new reality.

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