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Camera coming to Archer/Austin

Concern over recent crimes in community

By Tim Hadac

With warmer weather approaching, the Garfield Ridge Neighborhood Watch appears to be talking about crime more publicly.

Their apparent surge in action coincides with what appears to be rising concern about crime in the area.

In recent weeks, the 7-Eleven at Archer and Nashville was robbed. The Little Caesar's Pizza at 56th and Harlem was robbed. The TCF Bank branch at Archer and Austin, as well as the one near 55th and Mulligan, were robbed. A homeowner near 58th and Neva was the victim of two ruse burglars posing as utility workers. Easter decorations at the 55th/Archer/Narragansett triangle were stolen.

Those crimes have been hot topics of discussion in local Facebook groups and at the CAPS Beat 811 meeting earlier this month.

One response to such crime has been for 23rd Ward Ald. Silvana Tabares to purchase and install a pole-mounted surveillance camera (with a license-plate reader) at Archer and Austin.

The move was announced at the CAPS Beat 811 meeting. Officials did not indicate when the camera will be installed.

Several years ago, Tabares purchased a surveillance camera that was mounted at 53rd and Harlem. A similar move was later made by 14th Ward Ald. Edward M. Burke, who purchased one that was installed near 51st and Central.

They were purchased with aldermanic funds because the Chicago Police Department claimed it had no funds to buy cameras.

In the years since, officials have offered no evidence to suggest that the cameras have deterred crime or played a role in the apprehension of criminal suspects. Even questions about whether the cameras are linked to police or are even functional have been met with relatively vague answers.

Public reaction mixed

Reaction to the new camera at Archer and Austin was mixed, at least judging by shoppers at the Jewel-Osco in Garfield Ridge.

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A CPD surveillance camera. – *Supplied image*

CAMERA

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"I think it's great," said Moira Kalecki. "These criminals need to know that if you make trouble here, you are being watched and recorded 24/7. We should have twice the number of cameras we have now."

Joanne Reynolds was skeptical.

"It seems to me that these cameras only catch grainy images of suspects," she said. "Plus, they're all wearing hoodies and masks, so how do you identify them?"

Randy Conroy said, "What difference does it make? For all anyone cares, a criminal could walk up to a camera, wave and say, 'Hi, it's me. I committed this crime,' and it wouldn't matter because [Cook County State's Attorney] Kim Foxx would let them off the hook."

Maribeth Ochoa applauded Tabares for "dipping into her own funds to pay for the camera. There are a number of wards across the city where the alderman won't spend a dime on something like this because they say it's the police's job. So then nothing happens, and the criminals run wild. Glad that's not the case here."