

CAMBRIAN HEIGHTS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2020

DEALING WITH A PROBLEM PROPERTY

Many of us who live in Cambrian Heights, enjoy the qualities of this community in terms of the neighbourhoods, it is quiet, has few main through streets, friendly people and the majority of the properties are well looked after.

But things can change all a result of one property in a neighbourhood. This happened in one neighbourhood of Cambrian Heights. Ultimately it lead to a shooting that threatened the safety of nearby residents.

The objective of this document is to inform and make people aware that there are ways of dealing with a problem property beyond just calling the police that exhibits illegal activity of any sort but particularly drug trafficking through the day or night.

This document is based upon ALBERTA GOVERNMENT'S WEBSITE :

<https://www.alberta.ca/report-suspicious-property.aspx>

Since 2008, ALBERTA GOVERNMENT has enacted legislation which holds property owners accountable for activity taking place on their property. This legislation enables the removal of problem tenants who disrupt neighbourhoods and destroy property. This Alberta program is Safe Communities and Neighbourhoods ("SCAN").

TYPICAL ACTIVITIES OF ILLEGAL DRUG ACTIVITY

Some common signs of illegal drug activity include:

- frequent visitors at all times of the day, night, early morning. Visitors came in cars, by foot, by bike,
- visitors would come for a short visit and others would come and stay for a number of hours,
- visitors would park their vehicles in numerous locations in the neighbourhood,
- frequent late night and early morning activity,
- extensive home security (cameras),
- residents that are rarely seen, distant and secretive,
- windows blackened or curtains always drawn,
- neglected property and yard,
- people repeatedly visiting the property who only go to the front door for a short time or more often back lane activity,
- residents who regularly meet vehicles near the property for a short duration,
- residents come and go at all hours,
- strange odours coming from the house or garbage,
- garbage that contains numerous bottles and containers, particularly chemical containers,

- garbage left on the street and the back lane by visitors,
- crimes of opportunity in the neighbourhood involving breaking into vehicles, theft (bicycles, lawn mowers, lawn furniture etc.) and property damage,
- May have other activities happening on the property such as dealing in bike parts, used bikes and even stolen vehicles.

ALBERTA SAFE COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOOD (SCAN)

The Alberta Government has passed legislation in 2008 which is titled the *ALBERTA SAFE COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOOD ACT* (LINK TO THIS ACT <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/s00p5>)

SCAN holds property owners accountable for activity taking place on their property. It uses civil legislation to target residential and commercial properties in rural and urban Alberta. The activities targeted are drug trafficking, prostitution, and gang related crime. If an investigation confirms potential criminal activity, investigators will contact the property owners and attempt to resolve the problem. If informal methods are unsuccessful, SCAN can apply to the courts for a Community Safety Order that calls for the owner to meet a number of conditions, or for the property to be closed for up to 30 days.

In order to implement this Act the government set up the SCAN Unit as part of the responsibility of Alberta Sheriffs who are provincial peace officers under the authority of the Peace Officers Act.

HOW SCAN WORKS:

<https://www.alberta.ca/report-suspicious-property.aspx>

When community members report a suspicious property, SCAN investigators can:

- begin an investigation,
- gather information,
- issue a warning letter,
- mediate any dispute,
- work with the landlord to facilitate an eviction or resolution, and most importantly,
- apply to the Courts for a Community Safety Order that if successful:
 - call for owners to meet a number of conditions for a maximum of 1 year,
 - allow the property to be closed for up to 90 days,
- take any measures necessary to safely and effectively close the property.

Note in a recent case in Cambrian Heights, the Court put a full 1 year order which included a 90 day closure. Once the property is returned to the owner, the property must be operated for 9 months under the conditions of the court order. Should the owner contravene any of the conditions of the court order, SCAN can apply for an additional 90 day total closure of the property.

It should be noted that the property owner, is **charged the full costs** to close the property (install fence, board all windows and doors), maintain the property for 3 month shutdown and to remove the fence/boards after the 3 month shutdown period.

SHUTTING DOWN A PROBLEM PROPERTY – REQUIRES INPUT FROM THE NEIGHBOURS

First note that all reports and correspondence (verbal or written) filed with SCAN are CONFIDENTIAL.

There are two approaches:

- Contact SCAN by phone 1-866-960-SCAN (7226); calls are toll free,
- File a complaint online at the following webpage

<https://www.alberta.ca/report-suspicious-property.aspx#toc-4>

What we learned in dealing with the SCAN Program:

- Once a file is opened on a property, a Sheriff will be assigned to the file. This will enable future reports to be filed directly to the investigating SCAN Sheriff.
- SCAN likes to see reports/complaints **from multiple neighbours** when reporting events. These multiple reports are very *important* as this can provide SCAN with an appreciation for the impact events from the problem property are having on the neighbourhood.
- The type of reports filed with SCAN included the following:
 - Activity Reports of comings and goings of people coming to/from the property. An effort to note vehicles, number of people, descriptions of cars, license numbers, time of day, description of people.

Reports of major events, which may have involved police and other emergency responders such as fire or EMS.

- Reports of when there was property damage, property theft.
- Reports of when EMS visited the property.
- Reports of when Calgary Fire Services visits the property.
- Reports of visits by Calgary Police Services.
- Reports of when new vehicles (truck, car, motorcycles) are brought to the property.
- Reports of when one observes marketing of possible stolen property (e.g. bicycle and/or bike parts).
- Reports of when the known property owner visited their property.

ITEMS TO THINK ABOUT IN OBSERVING ACTIVITIES & OBTAINING INFORMATION

SCAN always requests that neighbours **be very careful** in observing and recording activities associated with the problem property,

Do not directly engage the residents of the property or **any people visiting** the property.

Be careful in how one obtains any picture of suspicious activity.

In reporting events/activities, state the facts of what you are observing.

Remember to note the following:

- Time of day & date,
- Number of people involved,
- Attempt to describe the people,,

- If are able to take pictures, provide to SCAN
- Describe vehicles involved (vehicle type, licence number, colour, if windows of vehicle are tinted),
- Describe the activity observed.

At all times **do not enter the problem property.**

Remember people who are involved in illegal activity are not shy about engaging in possible harassment activities. **If any neighbour is being harassed by residents of the problem property, they are advised to contact the Police.**

POLICE SERVICES

Engaging the CALGARY POLICE SERVICES is very important in obtaining a shutdown of problem property.

If you are observing emergency situations/criminal activities, contact 911.

Example of the activities/events which should be reported to the police:

- Discharging of firearms
- Residents of the problem property openly displaying firearms
- Violence/assault
- Property break-ins(house break-in, car break-in)
- Property damage

Sometimes, the residents of a drug house will hold a rowdy party which continues outside the hours of 11:00 pm. Neighbours are advised contact the police in this situation.

Anytime you have to contact the police about the problem property, you are advised to send SCAN a note. SCAN will obtain legal affidavits on all police visits.

In this recent property shutdown, there were a total of 32 recorded visits to the property. These visits were a key element, which helped SCAN assemble their court case.

CPS District 3 Office - North Haven
4303 14th Street NW
Phone 403-428-6300

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS

Given that most people have a cellular phone, an excellent tool for neighbours in a community to safely communicate is Facebook's "Whatsapp" is useful tool. This tool is encrypted and may better facilitate collaborative communications between neighbours.

INVOLVE THE CAMBRIAN HEIGHTS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

With the identification of potential criminal activities in a residence in your neighbourhood contacting the Community Association can assist with the process of publicizing your issues. The Community Association maintains close ties with a Calgary Police Officer liaison as well as the local Ward 4 Councillor and the MLA for Calgary Klein. These contact can prove invaluable in initiating contact with an Alberta Sheriff and the SCAN program. Assistance may also be provided by setting up a community committee made up of volunteer neighbours to both help accurate group communication within the surrounding residences and with the City and Provincial authorities.

Contact may be made by email to president@CambrianHeightsCommunity.com and attending a Board meeting (held monthly). Reference the Community Newsletter or our website (www.CambrianHeightsCommunity.com) for details of these meetings.