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Mayor addresses his promise to crack down on crime

By Julie Kreuz

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Copper thieves and graffiti artists beware—Mayor Ed FitzGerald is fulfilling his campaign pledge to crack down on crime.

Lakewood unveiled its much-discussed law enforcement initiative at a recent City Council committee of the whole meeting.

The initiative follows FitzGerald's mayoral campaign promise to improve public safety by cracking down on petty and misde-

meanor crimes which, he said, resulted in "two times more arrests in 2007 than normal."

A neighborhood police officer and a "mini police station" will be placed in each ward. The first station is scheduled to be ready by early June in Ward 4 in Fedor Manor, 12400 Madison Ave. Neighborhood police officers will patrol their ward on foot, bicycle and in cars and act as a community safety liaison.

Eight to 10 part-time officers will be hired and two-

part time officers will be employed per shift to take over tasks such as prisoner transportation.

Special assignment cars for high crime areas started patrols April 16.

Lakewood police will partner with U.S. Marshals to form a Violent Fugitive Task Force to identify felons living in Lakewood. The collaboration started with a zip code blitz April 16 in which 25 warrants were issued and 11 people were arrested. Future blitzes may take place although there are no plans

currently, said U.S. Marshal Pete Elliott. One Lakewood officer is assigned to the task force.

Processing time for felony cases will be reduced through the Cuyahoga County Prosecutors Office Pilot Prosecution Program. Felons will be moved to county jail within 48 hours of arrest in Lakewood. The process usually takes about 50 days, from arrest to indictment, said Bill Mason, Cuyahoga County prosecutor.

Lakewood's jail has enough space for 11 males and five

females, said Police Chief Tim Malley. In 2007 Lakewood held about 20 criminals per day in other city's jail facilities. Cost to hold criminals in other facilities is about \$75 per day, he said.

Lakewood's court system will still handle some felony arraignments, Malley said.

An interactive Web site also will be posted to offer accessible crime information. Residents will be able to make reports on less complex crimes such as stolen cell phones on the site.

Police, city officials and business owners are meeting to work out an agreement for West End bar patrols where off-duty police officers in uniform would patrol the residential areas around bars. Bar owners would pay for the patrols by contributing to a fund. The program may be implemented by May.

Nine bar owners so far have agreed to the fund, said

Ward 1 Councilman Kevin Butler.

Seven video surveillance cameras were erected in Madison Park. The dispatch center, supervisory personnel and patrol cars will have access to the cameras. Plans to expand to Lakewood Park are under way.

Members of the police, youth services and schools will meet to discuss youth intervention possibilities in an initial meeting set for May. Lakewood also has applied for funding for the Gang Resistance Education Training program.

Talks are also in place to set up internships at City Hall for Lakewood students.

Kent State University Professor Dan Flannery will act as a liaison to Lakewood to conduct an academic crime study. He will work to identify trends, conditions and responses and to forecast criminal conditions and occurrences.