

USC, Peters, S. Fayette in state's top 10 safest communities

David Singer, 1/23/15, thealmanac.net



According to the 2013 FBI Uniform Crime Report, three South Hills communities have come in the top 10 list of safest places to live. Peters Township came in ninth place, Upper St. Clair eighth and South Fayette seventh.

The FBI report looks at communities with populations over 10,000 and examines crimes such as murders, robberies, assaults and thefts. The real estate blog Movoto then took those and other categories and placed them into four major categories that were easier to collate: murders, violent crimes, property crimes and total crimes. Under the set criteria, 214 communities were on the list.

“We have the lowest property crime rate in the state,” said Peters Township police Chief Harry Fruecht. “And some of that has to do with our (newer) approach to tracking, logging and reacting to crime,” Fruecht said of the Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety database – or DDACTS – the department has been using since 2013.

“We saw a 27 percent drop in crime in targeted areas,” he added.

The DDACTS system is a proprietary crime logging and mapping system that shows officers clusters of crime and traffic violations, allowing Fruecht to best plan officers’ patrol routes.

“We were seeing crashes, traffic violations and crime were correlating in certain areas. So now, there are specific blocks of time where officers have to patrol the northern and southern parts of the township. It has become a deterrent just because of our visibility.”

Upper St. Clair Township police Chief Douglas Burkholder said aside from recent dramatic episodes involving a failed burglary attempt and an accidental fatal shooting in October, the department usually sees no major crimes.

“We don’t have a bar district or anything like that that brings with it the usual problems ... and as we saw with (the October shooting), alcohol doesn’t mix (with guns),” Burkholder said.

Burkholder otherwise attributes the township’s position on the list to the community being tight-knit and homeowners and businesses looking out for themselves.

“Almost everyone in the township has a security system in place. And we have a good working relationship with South Hills Village and the anchor stores’ security teams,” he said. The crime log in Upper St. Clair shows most are criminal mischief, underage drinking and retail theft.

“We have a crime mapping system as well that helps us track and react to crime,” said South Fayette police Chief John Phoennik. “But, the biggest parts are the community. They don’t hesitate to call us. We meet with homeowners’ associations once a month and let them know trending crime, if any, in their areas. This is a bedroom community, and residents know what to watch for.”