

BEVERLY, MT. GREENWOOD, MORGAN PARK

Citing 'Troubling' Police Shortages, O'Shea Brings Private Security To Beverly, Mount Greenwood

The private security guards will patrol commercial strips in Beverly, Morgan Park and Mount Greenwood, Ald. Matthew O'Shea said.



Mack Liederman 5:00 PM CDT on Jun 16, 2022



Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago
Storefronts along 103rd Street in Chicago's Beverly neighborhood on January 18, 2021.

Credibility: Original Reporting Sources Cited

BEVERLY — Unarmed private security guards will start patrolling business corridors on the city's Far Southwest Side, part of a growing trend of neighborhoods bringing in their own security in an attempt to keep areas safe.

Guards will monitor West 95th Street, West 103rd Street, West 111th Street and South Kedzie and South Western avenues in a pilot program starting next week and running through the end of the year, Ald. Matt O'Shea (19th) said.

The program is funded by a \$100,000 city grant given to the Morgan Park Beverly Hills Business Association, 95th Street Business Association and Mount Greenwood Community & Business Association to help businesses rebound from the pandemic, O'Shea said.

Three private security firms — Moore Security, Security Logistics Group and Law Dogs — will do routine unarmed patrols of commercial streets, O'Shea said.

Guards in marked cars will monitor the areas and be "additional eyes and ears" for law enforcement, O'Shea said in an email to constituents. The security can "observe and report suspicious activity or any type of legal activity" but cannot engage with the public, O'Shea said.

O'Shea, who has long lamented an ongoing shortage of Chicago police officers, announced the program in a message to 19th Ward residents Thursday.

"While I believe this program will make our neighborhoods safer, we must be clear that a private security guard is NOT a Chicago Police Officer," O'Shea wrote. "The duty of private security officers will be to observe and report. When a private security officer encounters suspicious activity, he or she will immediately contact the Chicago Police Department and remain on scene until CPD responds."

O'Shea, whose Far Southwest Side ward is home to many police officers, has said the department is routinely canceling scheduled days off for existing officers to make up for the shortage of cops.

"In the face of troubling CPD staff shortages, we as a community must do all we can to support, appreciate and respect the profession if we expect people to seek the job. In the meantime, we must also explore other opportunities to promote public safety in our community," O'Shea wrote to neighbors.



Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago
Ald. Matthew O'Shea (19th) at a City Council meeting in December 2021.

The security "operates on a rotating schedule" based on high-crime times, O'Shea said, with patrols happening during both daytime hours and overnights. They'll be in "regular communication" with the Chicago police, O'Shea said.

The private security comes from popular demand, neighborhood leaders said. The Southwest Side neighborhood associations emailed a survey to over 500 business owners on their mailing lists and received 101 responses for possible uses of the city grant, said Caroline Connors, executive director of the Morgan Park Beverly Hills Business Association.

Private security was the most popular choice, Connors said in an email.

Connors said local business owners have frequently expressed concerns about an increase in vandalism and overnight break-ins. The private security is "a service we're proving in support of our business owners," Connors said.

"We're initiating this program to ensure that our business districts and our neighborhood public areas remain safe and secure," Connors said. "We're looking to reduce vandalism and any break-ins, and we feel this is one way that we can help support the businesses."

Data for the 22nd Police District show robberies, burglaries and thefts are [all up significantly this year](#).

There's been 126 burglaries reported so far this year, compared to 71 at this point in 2021, comprising a 77 percent jump. Robberies are up 69 percent and thefts have more than doubled, data shows.

"I don't care who you talk to in any community in the city; people are scared, crime is up," O'Shea said. "When you drive through the 19th Ward and talk to small business owners, they're concerned. We suffered significant looting damage back in 2020, and when I speak to my different civic groups, all of whom have seen and faced and experienced crime patterns over the past few years."

Other neighborhoods also have explored or implemented private security.

In late 2021, Block Club [reported on a plan to implement private security patrols in a section of Bucktown](#), organized by a newly-formed group called the Bucktown Neighbors Association.

The group hired P4, a security company with offices Downtown and in suburban Downers Grove, to deploy off-duty police officers to the neighborhood for eight to 10 hours daily. [The program began in late December](#), and armed guards patrol the area between Winchester Avenue, North Avenue, Armitage Avenue and Paulina Street, according to a document shared by the association earlier this year.

Neighbors report the guards are now a daily sight on streets and alleys in the area.

P4 also patrols a section of Lincoln Park, an area near Howard Street on the Chicago and Evanston border and parts of Hyde Park in conjunction with UChicago Police, the company's vice president and principal Paul Ohm said. And that number could soon grow.

A group of neighbors near Fullerton Avenue in Lincoln Park, separate from the area P4 already patrols in the neighborhood, [also is trying to launch patrols with the company](#), Block Club reported in April.

It's not clear who comprises the group behind that effort. A flyer was distributed to residents along Burling Street, Orchard Street, Arlington Place and Fullerton Avenue, asking neighbors to chip in \$1,200 per household each year to make the patrols a reality.

The Chicago Loop Alliance has had a private security patrol for the central business district area since 2018. Its ambassador program, where 16 people patrol State Street picking up trash, helping tourists find their way and deescalating potentially violent situations, has been around since 2014.

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