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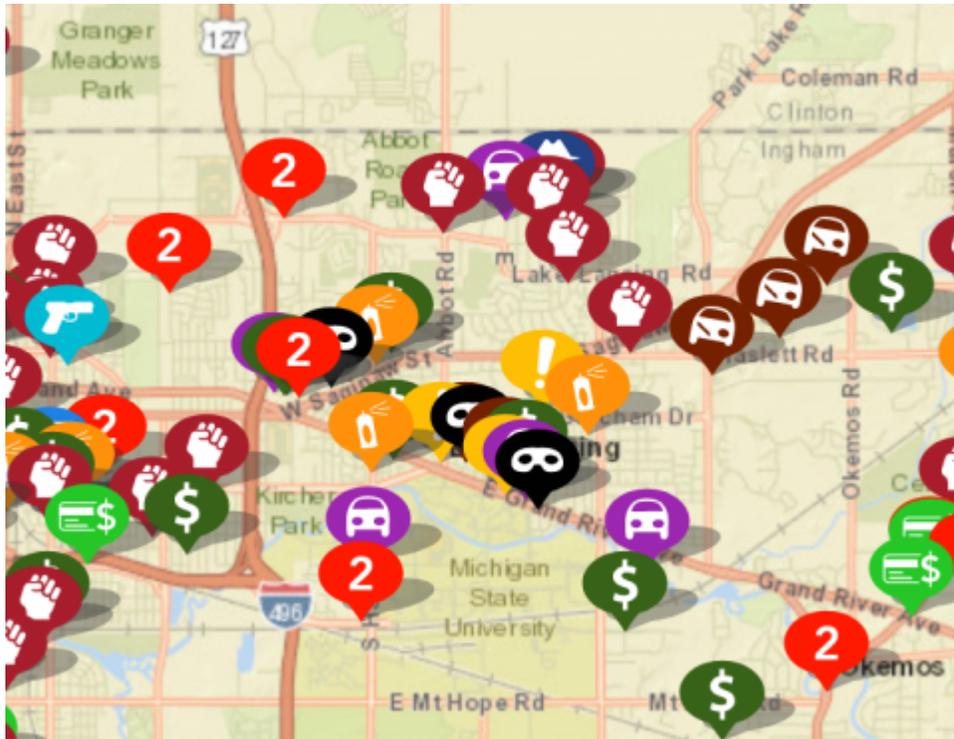
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Suspects Caught in String of Thefts Involving East Lansing Vehicles ^[1]

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By:

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Above: Image from ELPD's Crime Map ^[2] of East Lansing.

Thefts from Glencairn houses that occurred last summer and this summer remain under investigation, but the spike in vehicle break-ins in East Lansing may be over thanks to a tip and the work by East Lansing Police.

On Saturday, June 15, the East Lansing Police Department received a call with some information about who might be responsible for at least part of this string of thefts.

According to East Lansing Deputy Police Chief Steve Gonzalez, officers responded and were able to locate two vehicles, one occupied by three juveniles and the other by two juveniles and

an adult.

"We were able to recover a bunch of stolen property in the vehicles, Gonzalez told ELi in a recent interview. "One of the vehicles itself was actually stolen out of the Holt area. Once those individuals were taken into custody, it seems " and I'm knocking on wood here because it's only been a few days " that our break-in numbers have dropped off dramatically," Gonzalez said.

The person charged as an adult is a 17-year-old Lansing resident. (Michigan law allows individuals to be criminally charged as adults starting at age 17.) She was arraigned at the 54B District Court on June 16, the day after her arrest, charged with a felony count of "receiving and concealing stolen property-motor vehicle" because she was in possession of the stolen car.

She was not charged with being in possession of the personal property that had been stolen, because that property was in the car occupied by the three juveniles. They were each arraigned and charged with a misdemeanor count of possession of stolen property.

"Those were misdemeanors because of the dollar amount of the stolen property," Gonzalez explained.

Gonzalez tells ELi that the spike in break-ins and subsequent fall since the arrests is consistent with patterns that the ELPD has seen in the past. The break-ins are usually associated with a small group of individuals and, when they are apprehended, the number of incidents decreases.

"I took a look at the numbers beginning in May and we had quite a few larcenies from auto complaints," Gonzalez said. "We try to educate people to make sure they're closing their garage doors and locking their doors at night, looking out for their neighbors and calling us if they see anything in their neighborhood that could be related to a theft."

ELPD also takes some proactive measures with regard to enforcement and patrolling.

"We'll put officers in plainclothes and plain cars at night with the specific intent to make their way through some of these neighborhoods to try to catch these thieves in the act."

Crime data analysis shows helps officers target hot spots

While the number of burglaries from vehicles has been on the rise lately, the number of home invasions has not been. Gonzalez said for home invasions, the numbers have remained the same since last year.

"When I took a look at our burglary numbers for the same time period last year from May through mid-June, they're almost the exact same. For this time last year, we had six burglaries and we have had seven this year. Obviously, seven is seven too many, that's for sure, but the trend has not changed from year to year."

In the latest rash of thefts, the vehicle break-ins were spread out throughout the city, but there was a small concentration of them that took place near the Lansing/East Lansing border, north of Saginaw, on the west side of the city.

In the two-day span of June 13-14, there were 12 reports of larceny from a vehicle according to

ELPD.

It's generally what we see when the weather starts to turn warmer, simply because people are leaving their car windows down or forgetting to lock their car doors. Sometimes they will leave their garage door open inadvertently. I think that the group of individuals that were arrested on Saturday are at least partly responsible for the vehicle break-ins," Gonzalez said.

He encourages East Lansing residents to take "self-protection steps" to help prevent crimes like this from occurring, and explained that the individuals usually associated with these types of crimes are looking for opportunities and the "lowest hanging fruit in the neighborhood."

"The other thing I think is important for residents to know is that we certainly encourage them to call us if they see something that is just out of the norm for their neighborhood that they think might be suspicious. Often, we'll hear people say "well I saw some people walking through my neighbor's backyard but I really didn't think it was anything big and I didn't want to bother the police with it.?"

Calling this kind of concern in is not "bothering the police."

"If you call the police for anything we can definitely send an officer out to at least take a look at it. Err on the side of caution," Gonzalez said.

Publisher's note: *When this article was originally published, it included the name of the 17-year-old charged as an adult. A reader objected to that inclusion, given the age of the suspect, and we have now removed her name and will discuss with ELi's Community Advisory Board how to handle this issue in the future. We also invite readers to share their thoughts with us [3] on this.*

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