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2005 COMMUNITY
GUIDE

Enforcing a lesson

Residents who say they already are squeezed for space are balking at a parking crackdown around a local school.

By [Fred Durso Jr.](#)
March 31, 2005

When a resident approached Ted Scairato about a parking ticket she received at a local school, the community leader turned detective.

Scairato, vice president of the Broad Street West Civic Association, determined that the ticket was issued outside Bregy Elementary School, 17th and Bigler streets, by one of three sources: the First Police District, the Philadelphia Parking Authority or the school itself.

The real mystery is why officials are reducing parking options in an already-overcrowded area, he maintains.

"There are 54 houses on a block with probably 22 parking spaces," said Scairato, also the director of District Four of the **Sports Complex Special Services District**. "If everyone had just one car, where should the rest of them go?"

Neighbors of Bregy Elementary who routinely park around the school's perimeter on 17th, 18th, Bigler and Pollock streets have recently been finding tickets on their windshields.

The increased enforcement spurred some 60 residents to attend a community meeting last week at Galdo's Catering, 20th Street and Moyamensing Avenue.

"You have to maximize all of the area you have in this vicinity," said Scairato, explaining the residents' frustration. "You have to utilize every space you can find."

Bregy neighbors are not the only ones with shrinking parking alternatives.

In October, the Philadelphia Parking Authority began to strictly enforce the existing no-parking policy outside schools during school hours citywide.

School district officers were given permission to write tickets for violators parked in school zones, said Linda Miller, PPA spokesperson.

"It was definitely for safety reasons, quality-of-life issues and to let the neighbors know these areas are specifically for picking up and dropping off students," Miller said.

John Furey, president of the Broad Street West group, said safety has never been a problem around Bregy, adding he does not know of any student injuries or fatalities stemming from automobile accidents outside the school.

School district spokesperson Fernando Gallard said that last year, 93 students citywide were hit by a moving vehicle on their way to or from school. Approximately 70 percent of these students were hit right outside a school's perimeter, he added.



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Gallard could not confirm whether any of the accidents occurred outside Bregy.

"The enforcement of no-parking zones is one of the major things we're doing to boost pedestrian safety," he said.

Two weeks ago, the parking authority began placing warning notices on the windshields of cars parked around the school's perimeter. Officials then started ticketing, which Furey contends is a revenue-generating move by the city.

"Financially, it's creating hardships, but nobody is coming up with an intelligent plan" to fix the area's parking problems, said Furey. "Instead of amending the laws or rewriting the laws, they have selected enforcement."

The city should consider long-term goals when dealing with parking issues, he added.

"This neighborhood is changing dramatically," Furey said. "There's two or three cars for every household, but nothing is being done to alleviate the parking problems."

THE FIRST DISTRICT receives as many complaints about parking enforcement as it does a lack of enforcement, said Capt. Carmen Vuotto.

Parking dilemmas are handled on a case-by-case basis, he noted.

"Discretion and consideration is my policy," said Vuotto. "Each case is looked at individually, but the increase in enforcement is more so a safety factor and an overall quality-of-life factor of residents."

Vuotto acknowledged that the district has recently responded to parking complaints from school officials and also has focused on enforcement of angle parking. The strategy of examining one violation at a time extends into other police districts. The median of South Broad Street - an illegal but tacitly permitted parking area - has intermittently been targeted for ticketing over the years. Police districts, not the PPA, are responsible for ticketing in this area.

Police officials say there is no parking crackdown in effect on the strip, but noted that parking in turning lanes usually warrants a violation.

Inspector Stephen Johnson, commanding officer for South Police Division, said the city made "responses" to a few parking issues on Broad Street.

"We have to make a response when a hazardous situation presents itself and we're more than willing to work with the public before the circumstances become volatile and difficult to alleviate," he said.

Fourth District Community Relations Officer Charlie Sarkioglu agreed with Johnson's sentiments.

"We're sensitive to how tight parking is down here and we try to use all of our efforts to accommodate the public," he said.

Through talks with the PPA and local politicians, residents near Bregy Elementary are seeking solutions to their parking woes. Suggestions include fencing off a portion of the schoolyard for faculty parking and limiting the no-parking policy to the school's entrance.

Bregy's faculty is cooperating in the discussions.

"This is not going to be a utopia, but we think it will satisfy everyone's concerns and still keep the safety of the children the primary concern," said Furey.

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