

City sues those who are considered 'nuisance' police callers

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INDIANAPOLIS - Indianapolis officials are taking legal action against homeowners and businesses that constantly demand police services.

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department says it costs about \$100 to send an officer to a call for service. The city is now going to court to get back some of the money from locations that place excessive demands on police services.

A BP gas station and McDonald's restaurant near 38th and Illinois streets is the highest-volume run location in the north district. During a seven-month period in 2014, management called police to the location 214 times. Police dispatched 490 officers at a cost to taxpayers of nearly \$50,000.

IMPD has suggested to the station that it hire private security.

"We had it before. But now we want the police guys to come because they're afraid of the police, but not the security guards," BP station manager Baljinder Singh said.

The almost-daily demand for police service has had a ripple effect on the surrounding neighborhood, manifesting itself in a high rate of vacant properties and empty storefronts.

"People don't want to make an investment where they don't feel safe. And when we're constantly talking about the police runs and the crime and public safety challenges, and not the good work that people are doing here, it's hard to reverse that trend," said Michael McKillip with Midtown Indianapolis, Inc.

The city has a policy of aggressively pursuing locations that make inordinate demands on public safety resources.

A year ago, the city prosecutor filed a \$75,000 lawsuit against King's Inn to recover the cost of more than 700 police runs there over a three-year period. The city currently has 15 other suits pending, seeking to recover more than \$3 million.

"The tipping point is when a district commander has had enough, that there are other lives at stake as a result of a business owner not caring or being too concerned with his property becoming a drain, and ultimately, using IMPD as his private security force," assistant city prosecutor Mark Pizur said.

The other impact of high-demand locations is felt throughout neighborhoods with a lack of patrol time, special projects and community policing.

"We have a great police force. But doggone it, why do we have to keep loading them up with things they don't have to be loaded with and put them back into the neighborhood policing instead of the filling station policing," said Al Polin with the Mapleton-Fall Creek Association.

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