

# Burglars, Beware

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The homeowners were gone, but a neighbor who spoke to police mentioned a resident's security camera which covered the street. Using the video, police were able to identify the make, model and year of the suspect vehicle, and even saw photos of the female suspect pointing to the victim's house. From that lead, Lafayette Police sifted through Department of Motor Vehicle records and found a matching – stolen – suspect car.

"That's the value," said Christensen. He echoed Davis, saying the "most effective" surveillance cameras are the ones aimed at the street. "If neighborhoods can install them near a 'choke [egress] point' that is a significant value," he added.

Orinda Police Chief Scott Haggard sees both sides of the coin. Cameras, along with burglar alarms, he said, "may serve as a strong deterrent to your home," especially with signs warning of their presence. They're not foolproof, though.

"Most burglars are aware of the use of cameras and they tend to wear hoods or pulled down caps to conceal their face. I have viewed many video tapes of crimes that are rendered of minimal value because the subject cannot be identified," he said. "Conversely, cameras have identified many subjects."

Haggard suggests homeowners considering sur-

veillance cameras look into the video motion and off-site monitoring which alarm companies offer. "They cost," he said, "but they come with audio that the alarm company can see and hear." Additionally such systems allow the alarm company to give police a 'play by play' until police arrive on site.

Realtor Diane Reilly of Alain Pinel Realtors echoes Haggard's preference for off-site video monitoring capabilities. "Personally, I have found that for most buyers a security system is a must-have, and an up-to-date, state of the art security system with cameras and being able to monitor on iPad or cell phone is very desirable," Reilly said.

Reilly's co-worker, Ben Marshall, is more cautious: "I think it can come in handy, but it's a relatively cheap thing to install so it wouldn't increase the value of a home. If anything, seeing a security system in a house would give me pause, because I would assume that the previous owners didn't feel safe in that home," Marshall said.

Lastly, an insurance company weighs in on the matter. Abbe Sultan, president of Lafayette's Stone Creek Insurance, said he's actually brought up the use of surveillance cameras with their carriers.

"We live in an area where it's a little more affluent," Sultan said, and although insurance companies



Typical surveillance camera Photo Cathy Dausman

will offer a discount for homeowners who have central alarm systems or fire sprinklers, having security cameras offers "no additional discount."

The camera "doesn't inform," he said, "it only captures."

And that may be the homeowner's ... and law enforcement's ... fondest dream.

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