

Target gives city \$300,000

Retail chain's donation to go to crime-fighting services

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Target, the big-box retailer that recently opened a new store at Mondawmin Mall, announced a \$300,000 donation to the Baltimore Police Department yesterday that will help police and the store's security officials coordinate crime-fighting efforts in West Baltimore.

Officials said the donation came as part of a partnership between the Police Department and the retail giant that will help the city purchase new equipment and bolster its anti-crime initiatives, particularly around the mall, which is undergoing a \$70 million makeover. Through its "Safe City" program, company officials said, the chain has funded similar initiatives in about 20 cities, including Washington, Boston, Chicago and Atlanta.

At an event outside City Hall yesterday, Mayor Sheila Dixon and police Commissioner Frederick H. Bealefeld III said the money would enable the department to purchase portable command posts and enhance a cell-phone tracking system designed to solve violent crimes, particularly robberies.

"Baltimore's Safe City project ... provides resources to enhance our fight against violent crime and increased community engagement," Bealefeld said. "At the same time, it begins a new public-private partnership between law enforcement, the business community and the citizens of the Mondawmin neighborhood."

The leaders also challenged the businesses community to follow suit by contributing to the department. When asked if the donation could create a perception that the city's businesses must contribute money to receive better services, Dixon responded: "It takes money to do everything. Let's face it."

Private donations to police departments or their fundraising foundations are nothing new, helping to fund various pet projects and buy equipment that cash-strapped governments can't afford.

As long as a decade ago, Orioles owner Peter G. Angelos was paying off-duty police overtime to patrol downtown. Last week, Home Depot, which has a store in Northwest Baltimore, donated \$25,000 in

supplies and volunteer hours to help fix up three police district stations.

The **Greater Baltimore Committee** has been asking its member businesses to make donations to help fund the city's Operation Safe Streets program, a Health Department program that hires ex-offenders to reach out to youth and mediate disputes before they turn violent.

"The business community recognizes the importance of public safety, not only the tragedy that crime has on victims and their families, but also the impact that it has on the community in general and on economic growth," said GBC President Donald C. Fry. "That's why you find business stepping up, not necessarily seeking preferential treatment, but because they see the overall benefits."

But the Target donation is different in that it establishes a partnership between the department and the retailer. Target has carved out a growing role as a high-tech partner that helps local, state, federal and international law enforcement agencies solve crimes.

Among its crime-fighting efforts, which are little known to the consumers who flock to the store for its affordable-yet-chic clothing and other products, is one of the most advanced crime laboratories in the country, located in Minneapolis.

Tony Heredia, Target's director of asset protection, said a dialogue with Baltimore officials began last year as the store was considering opening the new location. He said Target representatives seek to bring community stakeholders together to create a dialogue on how to address neighborhood problems.

"Part of our consideration when putting a store in any urban environment is how successful our relationships with community are going to be long-term," Heredia said. "We want to make sure we can operate a successful store while helping to mitigate our effect on that area, whether it's traffic or crime."

State officials provided a \$140,000 matching grant to go along with Target's contribution, which police officials say will jump-start the long-dormant police foundation.

