

"I believe you have more poor people who believe in honesty than middle-class or wealthy people," Lorenza McCord, an officer who has been with the bureau for one year and patrols a beat which includes the East Lake Meadows project and the Kirkwood neighborhood, said. Both areas are regarded as among the roughest in the city.

Although he feels that as a policeman he has much in common with the inhabitants of his beat, McCord said he does not understand "why some of the people around here have such a negative attitude about police.

"They might hate the police today," he said. "But they'll like the police tomorrow because they'll need us."

Still, many poor residents are finding it hard to trust the police.

"You really can't trust them too much," a 33-year-old resident of the Gilbert Gardens housing project on Gilbert Road in southeast Atlanta said recently.

"I feel they should work a little harder," a 12-year-old who lives in the project said. "I see fights every day, man. And police take their time getting there. Most of them, they scared to come in here too."

Gilbert Gardens is located in the "war zone." Other housing projects in Zone Three include Jonesboro North and South, East Lake Meadows, Capitol Homes, Englewood Manor, Thomasville Heights and Leila Valley.

White Zone One, made up of the northwest quadrant of the city, is the largest in area. Zone Three is the most densely populated area of Atlanta. There are also more officers patrolling Zone Three than there are in any other zone.

In the four other precincts, violent crimes were down from the record levels of 1979, but in Zone Three they increased.

Deputy Police Chief Eldrin Bell, who is in command of all the city's uniformed officers, said that there may never be a time when police are welcomed with open arms in the southern part of the city which contains more people living at or below the poverty level than any other section of Atlanta.

"Keep in mind that a whole lot of their problems are not police problems, they are problems some other agency must address," Bell said. The lack of attention to those problems, he said, eventually lead to situations where the police are needed.

FRIDAY IN THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION: Schools and the poor.



Clipped By:

jdwrites

Wed, Sep 21,
2022