

"Dear John" Billboards Slated for Lyell Avenue



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["Dear John" Billboards on Lyell](#)

(Rochester, N.Y.) – It's been a while since the issue made headlines, but there's a new reminder that prostitution remains a scourge on Lyell Avenue.

A billboard recently up near Hague Street saying, "Dear 'John,' your relationship with this neighborhood is over."

Neighborhood resident Tammy Williams likes the message.

"They're all up and down the street at all times of the night. They walk down my street over there. They try to pick tricks up off the street," she said.

Several more billboards targeting johns will soon go up on the street. A grassroots group called Lyell 230 spearheaded the effort. Representatives couldn't immediately say how much the project cost, only that the money came from small grants and private donations.

The Rochester Police Department could not immediately say if there has been an increase in prostitution activity in the neighborhood, or whether there have been any recent stings to net johns and prostitutes. A spokeswoman said the department would give more information at a Thursday news conference on the billboards.

Jennifer Wolfley has counseled prostitutes on Lyell Avenue for 8 years. She said activity has remained steady. She assisted in the billboard project.

"Maybe it's a way of somebody, have a little voice in their conscience when they come down to do certain types of behaviors and this way, maybe they'll think twice and go home," she said.

Pizza shop owner Darla DiGiacco doesn't think the billboards will make a difference.

"In this neighborhood, I really don't think it's going to make that much difference. I'm out here all day long, me and my husband, and we see them out here on the avenue," she said.

Another business owner said the billboards will draw negative attention, and he declined our request for an interview.

"Hopefully, it will keep the johns away. I hope it stops them from picking up the tricks off the street," Williams said.



