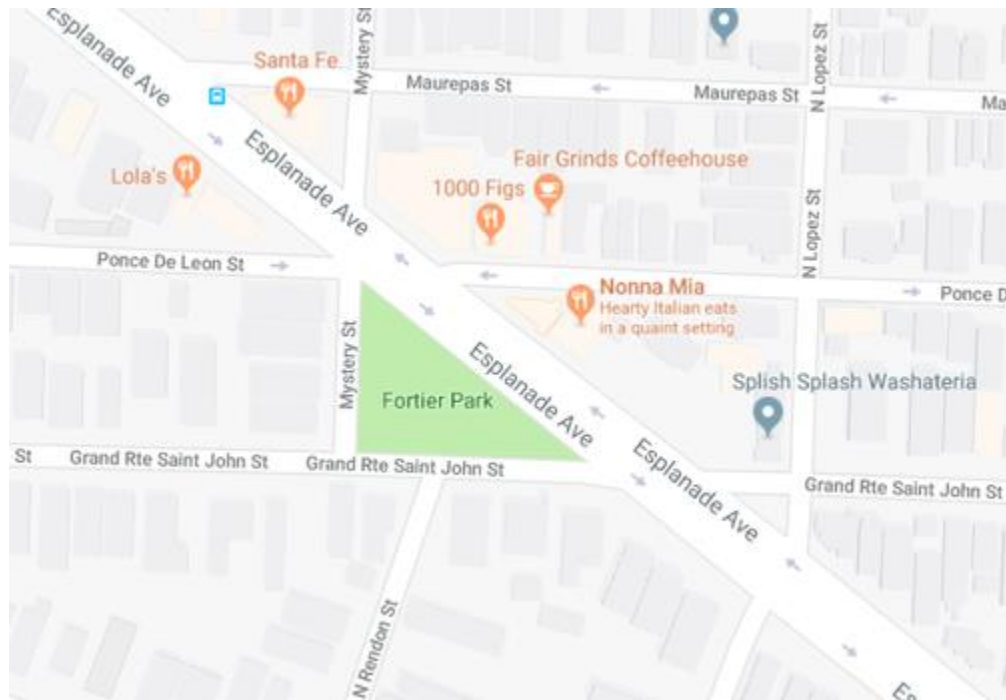


# Residents complain of harassment, trash stemming from Fortier Park squatters

Posted by [Claire Byun](#) at 10:24 am [Featured](#), [neighborhood groups](#)  
Dec 11, 2017

<http://midcitymessenger.com/2017/12/11/residents-complain-of-harassment-trash-stemming-from-fortier-park-squatters/>



Several Faubourg St. John residents are struggling to keep Fortier Park clean due to a group of men who regularly drop trash and beer bottles around the small greenspace.

The daily group have also been known to harass passersby, so a team of concerned residents have teamed up to stamp out harassment in the park.

Steve Chaplain, Mystery Street resident, said a crowd of men come to the park every morning, buy alcohol at neighboring businesses and get drunk throughout the day. The men urinate in the bushes, leave trash around the chess tables and sleep on the benches, Chaplain told the Faubourg St. John Neighborhood Association.

“People don’t want to come out here and eat their lunch outside with a bunch of drunks,” he said.

A group of volunteers removed dead palm fronds, picked up litter and cut back overgrowth in the park earlier this month. The crew also removed benches to deter the daily crowd from sleeping, Chaplain said.

Andy Ryan, who helped clean the park, said he's most frustrated by the group's attitude toward young students; men frequently cat-call Cabrini High School students on their way home from school.

"They are teenagers. It's despicable," Ryan said.

Residents have called police several times – especially for public urination – but police action is limited unless the perpetrators are caught in action, Chaplain said. Area police know the park is a hotspot, however, and the Fair Grounds Patrol has dedicated every shift to swing by the park at least once, according to Jim Danner, FSJNA security director.

A few of the daily park visitors live in the neighborhood, Danner said, but many come from other areas of the city.

"Because of the uptick in the problems we've had once the track opened, it's difficult not to say that part of these problems are due to track employees," Danner said.

FSJNA has formed a committee to form ideas on how to keep the park safe and clean, and possibly gain help from city officials, if needed. Sarah Stogner, FSJNA president, urged people to file a police report every time one of the men harass a passerby or student. If enough people report harassment, the harasser will be cited and have to go to court.

"It'll be a big pain in the butt, which will probably force it to go away," she said.