The Delphos community is quite appalled right now. It should be. I'm sure residents throughout the region share our reaction to a senior citizen being beaten in her own home. This is an outrage but Margaret Ditto is wise to inject a calm sense of reflection into the mix.

How did we get to this point? How did we, as a community, get to a place where something this atrocious has happened here?

There is no simple answer. There are many contributing factors and the responsibility rests primarily at the feet of the perpetrator but others played a role.

Mrs. Ditto and the police chief both told me the same thing — people in her neighborhood have been practically screaming about one set of apartments widely-known as a problem property. The chief said good people have, periodically, lived there and this is true of the couple now living in the other apartment. However, most of the tenants in the duplex have been the kind of people we might say aren't "winning" thus far in their lives.

Unfortunately, the area of Dewey Street and Lima Avenue is not the only good neighborhood infected with a property or two where drugs are involved. Many of those who rent in Delphos are law-abiding residents, but those who are not make life difficult for neighbors who don't deserve being stuck with uncivil, if not criminal, behavior next door or down the street. Mrs. Ditto certainly did not deserve what happened to her.

The police department is well-aware of the problem and is doing what it can. When someone gets out of jail or gets off of parole, they are out there without a leash. Well, pretty much. The cops know who they are and are keeping an eye on them. However, they are busy. They can't babysit every degenerate 24/7. There are some things the city can do but neither the city or police department can simply run someone out of their home, generally speaking. Once these miscreants are caught having broken the law, they can be locked up. I think I can speak for the community in saying that's great but it's a too late. At least in Mrs. Ditto's case.

Something needs to be done about this problem. Yes, individuals are responsible for their behavior. As I mentioned, it's primarily at the criminals' feet but what can the community do? The city and the police department have to work within the law. So do the rest of us who are law-abiding, but are we overlooking anything?

I would like to see us band together. Community watch programs are great. You know what else would be great? If the landlords in Delphos would all band together and pledge to screen all applicants and not rent to anyone with a certain criminal background. Or, at least, only rent to them under certain conditions. It would also be great if landlords enacted "community guidelines." I have a friend in California who lives in an apartment complex where renters are not allowed to be noisy or trashy. There are strict rules and if you break them, you can be evicted. Because it does sometimes come to that, everyone takes the standards seriously. They behave properly and this makes the arrangement nice for everyone. This community is also a nice place to live but some of our neighborhoods are suffering. It's time to take action, Delphos.