

***Safe Neighborhood
Apartment Partnership:***

***Law Enforcement and Rental
Communities Working Hand in***

***Hand
A Problem Oriented Policing Project
Fresno Police Department***

Officers Don Gross and Eric Eide

City of



POLICE DEPARTMENT

Northeast Problem Oriented Policing

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Safe Neighborhood Apartment Partnership:
Law Enforcement and Rental Communities Working Hand in Hand
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ABSTRACT:

Scanning: Currently there is no viable mechanism for the average citizen to determine if a rental properties owners are dedicated to high quality of life standards. As well, there is no mechanism for recognizing the apartment complexes that do a good job of managing their properties and working with local city agencies to promote a better quality of life in the City of Fresno.

Analysis: P.O.P. teams routinely judge the effectiveness of apartment complex management based on subjective criteria. There should be a way to relate this rating to the public and at the same time provide an incentive to apartment complexes who are providing good service.

Response: Create a departmental award to recognize proactive apartment mangers and their efforts as well as bring positive recognition to the complex. The "Safe Neighborhood Apartment Partnership".

Assessment: Calls for service have remained low in the SNAP project areas. In addition the grounds and general appearance continue to remain at City standards.

SCANNING:

Currently in the City of Fresno there is no viable way for the average citizen to effectively gauge an apartment's commitment to desirable community standards. Most citizens are not attuned to recognizing signs of gang behavior or drug abuse. There are no effective means to reward the apartment complexes that strive to meet the City's goals of providing a better "quality of life" for it's residents. The problem was identified by POP officers as a result constant contact with apartments that are lacking in that commitment. In addition officers were frequently asked by citizens what apartment complex would be a "good one" to live at. Specialist Eide, and I decided that there must be a way visibly recognize those complexes that met the City's standards for quality of life issues and took those extra steps to ensure the safety of their residents and the community as a whole.

ANALYSIS:

POP teams are primarily driven by calls for service. If a complex is generating excessive calls for service we work with the owners/managers in an attempt to improve their management efforts and meet the City's minimum standards. If the owner is reluctant to comply we utilize both traditional and non-traditional enforcement options, both of which require a substantial amount of resources by the Police Department and other City agencies.

P.O.P. officers currently gauge apartment complexes by the following criteria:

- Calls for service
- City standards for structures and grounds maintenance
- Managerial effectiveness
- Tenant responsibility
- Public safety~"quality of life"

The calls for service are compiled by the crime analysis unit. Complexes which generate an exceptionally high number of calls for service then raise "quality of life" issues which are readily apparent to officers serving the neighborhood and resident who live there.

Community meetings were organized with residents of these apartment complexes. The purpose was to evaluate the above criteria and to determine the nature and extent of the problems that were occurring within the rental community.

What we discovered through our analysis of rental properties was in the City of Fresno there is no viable way for the average citizen to effectively gauge an apartment's commitment to desirable community standards. While the P.O.P. officer has access to calls for service, crime analysis, etc.. the average citizen does not. For the apartment renter it was a matter of picking an apartment based solely on appearance at the time of rental and not much more. Many times we had heard the story that an apartment "seemed nice" when they rented, but soon discovered that problems were abundant in the complex.

In addition to renters having difficulty finding suitable apartments to rent we also found that the truly responsible apartment owners and managers were not being appropriately recognized by our department. We were very efficient at dealing with problem complexes but had no mechanism to reward those doing a good job in the community.

In addition to meeting with managers and tenants in our various P.O.P. projects we met with representatives from the Apartment Association of Greater Fresno. We soon realized that while we were providing prospective tenants with invaluable information and rewarding complexes for meeting City standards we would also be offering an incentive to those apartments who were on

the borderline to improve their business practices.

Prior to this program the City of Fresno did not provide any information to it's citizens about apartment complexes.

RESPONSE:

Our response was to provide a visible incentive for apartment owners and managers to comply with P.O.P. standards, rather than coercing compliance from a reluctant owner. Our intentions were to motivate and encourage the apartment owners to exceed the City standards on their own, rather than mandating compliance. A new program was implemented called S.N.A.P. which stands for Safe Neighborhood Apartment Partnership.

This award consists of a metal sign posted on the property advertising the Fresno Police Department's *Safe Neighborhood Apartment Partnership (S.N.A.P.) "Award of Excellence"*. By forming the *Safe Neighborhood Apartment Partnership "Award of Excellence"* the Fresno Police Department would provide a way to inform the public about the level of commitment the apartment complex has made to our community. This award would be available to any apartment complex that met the following criteria:

1. Successful completion of a formal Neighborhood Revitalization inspection.
2. A management training course in tenant screening and recognition of drug and gang influence as provided/approved by the Fresno Police Department.
3. Improved safety measures as necessary to address property specific problems.
4. Calls for service from the complex that do not exceed the average for the neighborhood by more than 25%

The "award of excellence" process can be initiated by officers in the field or by the apartment owners request to be considered, the following steps need to be completed:

1. Calls for service will be pulled for the apartment complex and analyzed.
2. The property will be inspected by the P.O.P. officer for site specific security problems. Items of this nature can include but are not limited to: lighting for parking and walkways, fencing to control unwanted traffic, landscape maintenance to improve visibility, etc.
3. The P.O.P. Officer will then ensure that the management is proficient in tenant screening concepts and able to recognize illicit drug use and/or criminal street gang affiliation. The Officer will also ensure that the management understands the P.O.P. philosophy of universal accountability.

This can be accomplished by the Officer providing the training or by making use of the Apartment Association of Greater Fresno's training academy.

4. The property will then be inspected by the City of Fresno Neighborhood Revitalization Specialist for the area. The inspection will ensure that the property is following City standards for rental property.

Once the above steps have been completed, the P.O.P. Officer and apartment manager sign a SNAP contract. (See attached) This signed contract is then be forwarded to the area commander who reviews the request for SNAP participation.

Once approved the signs are picked up from Sanders Decal Inc., at 2525 E. Hammond Fresno California 93703, (209) 268-8441. Prior to the signs being posted at the individual sites, officers engrave the POP case number, and number of signs purchased on the back of the sign. For

example NE 95-41 North Pointe 1 of 6 signs. In this way the signs will remain at the proper site and not turn up at other properties. It is the responsibility of the P.O.P. officers issuing the signs to track them via the P.O.P. database. The S.N.A.P. program, signs, and contract have been reviewed and approved by the City's Legal Advisor.

The major concerns expressed in the implementation were the legality issues relating to the "implied safety" of a community and cost. The first concern was alleviated by spelling out the criteria for the award and a small disclaimer on the posted sign itself. As for cost, the apartment complexes themselves pay for the signs that they post on their property.

ASSESSMENT:

Calls for service have remained low in the SNAP project areas. In addition the grounds and general appearance remain at City standards. Through periodic monitoring to ensure that the criteria continue to be maintained the project will be self sufficient. Should the complex fall below the established standards, the signs which have been leased are removed until compliance is again achieved.

Officers have remained in contact with apartment managers of SNAP projects and have been pleased to see managers and owners living up to the standards spelled out in the award. It appears that once this award has been received then management is willing to do what it takes to retain it. To date not one SNAP project has had its privileges revoked.

The implementation of the SNAP project Citywide has proven to be quite beneficial for both P.O.P. teams and the City's housing code enforcement. As a result of the program, managers and apartment owners now have a goal to shoot for when improving their properties. Also, once the

award is given, there is less follow up needed as managers are more willing to maintain their properties once they have made the initial investment to receive the award in the first place.

As with many projects this will require monitoring to ensure that the project remains effective. That process is not time consuming, however, as most apartment managers and owners are monitoring one another to ensure that the award maintains a high level of prestige. In addition, patrol officers can easily visually monitor the condition of the SNAP projects and then report back to the P.O.P. teams should they appear to be deteriorating.

Since its creation in October of 1996, the Safe Neighborhood Apartment Partnership program has been implemented City wide with over 20 projects currently in operation

The manager of the original S.N.A.P. project (North Pointe Apts. NE95-41), was recontacted and reported the following:

- Occupancy rate was at 69% prior to the project, and is now at 85%.
- Good tenants across the socio-economic strata, have increased in numbers while those who created problems have relocated.
- There has been a marked increase in referrals from good tenants, increasing the number of stable residents. Referrals account for up to 20 rentals a month.
- The feeling of security has increased dramatically with recommended safety measures established.
- There is a much closer cooperation with law enforcement, as evidenced by the recent case in which residents assisted our department in apprehending 4 auto theft suspects. (Case # 97-10687)

- Tenants have not expressed that the S.N.A.P. program was the primary reason for their moving into the complex, but after being informed of the program became an important factor in their decision to live there.

One of the problems that the manager expressed with the S.N.A.P. program was that it was not well publicized within the community. She stated that while most prospective tenants like the idea its not common knowledge.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION:

The SNAP program has been adopted by the entire police department as well as the City of Fresno's Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization. Implementation of the project is achieved through the P.O.P. teams and the City code enforcement. A policy and procedure sheet was written, (See attached) and training was given to the P.O.P. Sergeants prior to the project implementation. In order to track the awards being given the department's P.O.P. data base was used.

In order to implement this project very few department resources were needed. Recipients of the award make the monetary commitment for the metal signs, which covers all of the physical expense. The only other commitment needed is that of time from the P.O.P. officer and housing code inspector.

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