



Successful Practices & Strategies

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Novato Police Department

Novato, California

<http://www.ci.novato.ca.us/Index.aspx?page=1947>

Community policing element

Problem solving

Problem/issue

Drugs, gang activity, and assaults

Problem description

The Novato Police Department has identified a number of multi-family housing units in the city that are responsible for a high number of calls for service related to drug activity, gangs, and assaults. Our agency is also interested in implementing preventative measures to discourage the above mentioned problems from occurring in our community.

Community policing strategies implemented

Under the COPS Hiring Program (CHP) grant, our agency identified three problem areas: schools-based policing, vandalism, and assaults. The CHP grant allowed our agency to hire three officers to be part of a cohesive problem-solving team that would have the flexibility to address the problem areas mentioned above and implement community policing programs. One such program implemented early this year by the Novato Response Team (NRT) was the Crime Free Multi Housing Program (CFMHP). Before implementing the program, an officer from the NRT and the supervising code enforcement officer attended the International Crime Free Conference in Riverside, California. The program consists of three phases that must be completed under the supervision of the trained NRT officer. Property managers become individually certified after completing all three phases. The NRT officer also attended a train-the-trainer session to prepare him to provide an eight-hour class to property managers.

All three phases must be completed to become a certified property.

Phase 1: An eight-hour course presented to property managers by the police department. This course covers crime prevention principles, tenant screening, the crime free lease addendum, premise liability, and other topics.

Phase 2: An on-site inspection of the property for crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) changes. The property must meet minimum CPTED standards before it can move on in the program. Minimum standards include security peep holes, deadbolt locks, strike plate screws, landscape



maintenance, window locks or pins, adequate lighting, and other features. A completed CPTED survey is provided to management staff.

Phase 3: The property manager hosts a tenant crime prevention meeting. This “safety social” is attended by members of the Novato Police Department. It is focused on spreading awareness of the Crime Free program to residents, and encouraging them to participate in keeping the property free of crime. Property management must continue to send new staff to the eight-hour training within four months of their hire date as well as fully re-certify the property every two years.

The NRT also partners with our code enforcement division to administer the program. Code enforcement already has an ongoing, annual multi-family inspection program at the 211 multi-family units in Novato. Their established relationships with property managers and their expertise are invaluable when conducting on-site inspections of the properties to ensure they meet CPTED requirements.

Change and/or impact as a result of these community policing efforts

Through the program, the NRT has been able to develop strong relationships with property managers while enhancing trust. We believe that through increased communication with property managers and tenants we can ensure our multi-family housing properties remain safe for all residents. One method of communication will occur when certified properties receive monthly calls for service logs that will inform property managers of criminal activity on the property. It is during this process that the NRT will work with property managers to review calls for service to determine if further action is required by the property owner.

Another key community benefit of being certified under the program is improved environmental design that discourages criminal activity on the property. The program requires properties to provide sufficient lighting and to ensure that landscaping adheres to crime prevention principles and all points of entry are properly secured.

Lessons learned through program implementation

Although early in the implementation of the program, our agency has identified a 19 percent reduction of calls for service from a property that was known for its high calls for service. This property is in phase two of the program and in the process of making CPTED upgrades. Currently, the NRT has certified one property, and eight others are in the process of making CPTED upgrades to their properties (phase two). We are learning that phase two of the program can be the most time consuming, because it may take older properties longer to make required upgrades. Our first certified property was new construction, which meant it easily met all CPTED requirements.



Novato is the first city in Marin County to implement this proven program, which had also been implemented by other San Francisco Bay Area cities. Before our agency implemented the program, we had Novato Police Department representatives visit those cities that had the program in order to learn from their experiences. A Novato property owner who also has properties certified under the program in other cities is supportive of the program because they have experienced firsthand the positive impacts it has had on crime reduction on their properties. According to data collected by the Crime Free Association, other cities that have successfully implemented the program have seen a 30–40 percent drop in calls for service at certified properties and a 30–60 percent decline in police reports. The NRT will measure the success of the program by tracking calls for service of certified properties over time.

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