

Noise in Neighborhoods: Achieving Community Together (ACT)



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The shifting makeup of neighborhoods

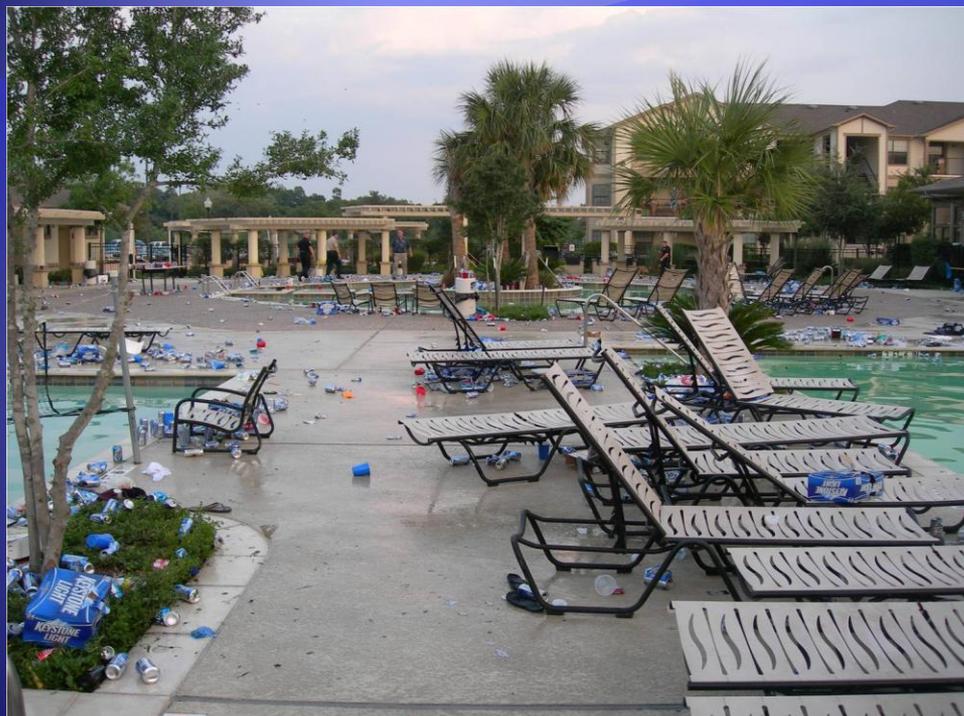


SCANNING

Colliding Cultures Can Diminish Quality of Life



Problem Statement



Noise - the most frequent police call for service

Problem Statement

- **In August 2007, conflict erupted between residents of a densely populated student renter location and an adjoining single family neighborhood.**
- **The student-dominated Sagewood Drive area near the Texas State University campus had become the quintessential example of how rowdy behavior and its detrimental effects on sleep-deprived neighbors could create discourse between two groups of residents.**

Problem Statement

Noise:

- Affects livability
- Diminishes quality of life
- Economic impact
- Results in neighborhood being less desirable place to live



2007 Patrol Division Calls for Service

Noise – 2,833 calls for service

- Noise constituted 8.2% of citywide calls for service
- Noise constituted 16% of calls for service between 9:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m.



Densely populated Sagewood duplexes

ANALYSIS

SARA Problem Solving Work Group

- Partnership with Department of Criminal Justice, Texas State University
- University classroom as a research tool



Analytical Methods

- Literature review
- Underlying issues
- How the police conduct business
- City ordinances
- Interviews
- Survey

Literature Review



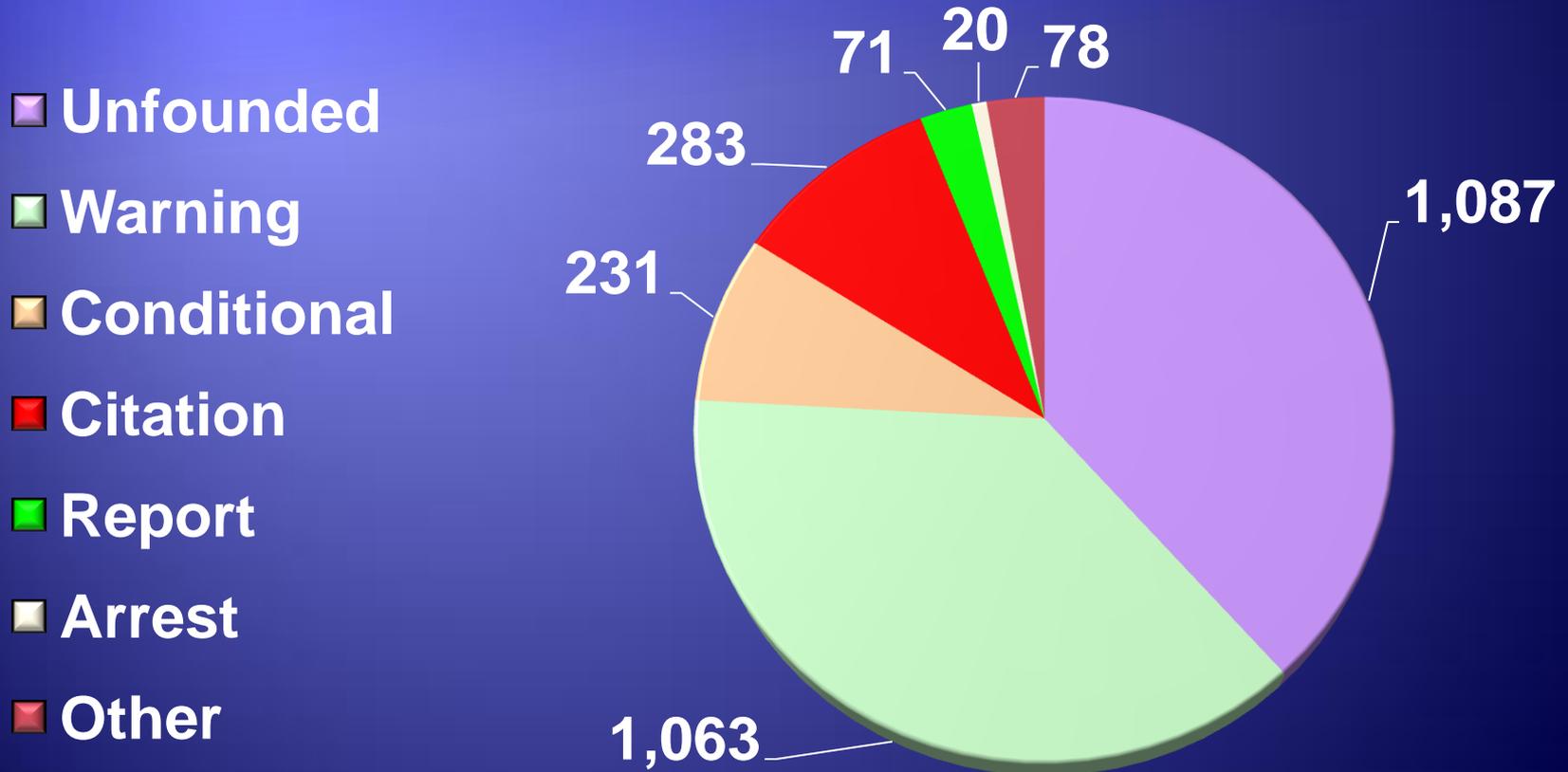
Underlying Issues – Expectations and Harms

- **Clash of expectations**
 - “Quiet neighborhood” vs. “Noise as an expected byproduct of youthful gatherings”
- **Harms**
 - **Disorder**
 - **Diminished confidence in government and law enforcement**
 - **Drain on community resources**
 - **Animosity and tension**
 - **Economic impact**

Underlying Issues – Traditional Response

- Lack of coordinated response between stakeholders. *Whose problem is it?*
- No coordinated assessment of current response
- Staffing and resources
- Shifting priorities
- Little educational or preventive strategies
- Reliance on enforcement resolving core issues

Underlying Issues – Disposition of Noise Complaints



Underlying Issues – 2007 Top Locations

1. University Heights	182
2. Cabana Beach	158
3. The Zone	129
4. The Outpost	126
5. Villagio	119
6. Exchange II	96
7. Sagewood Drive	92
8. The Ridge	71
9. University Springs	59
10. Sanctuary Lofts	55

Underlying Issues – Repeat Locations

Year	Apartment	Residence	Sagewood
2002	15	11	1
2003	71	54	10
2004	30	38	2
2005	87	71	18
2006	96	61	14
2007	110	35	6

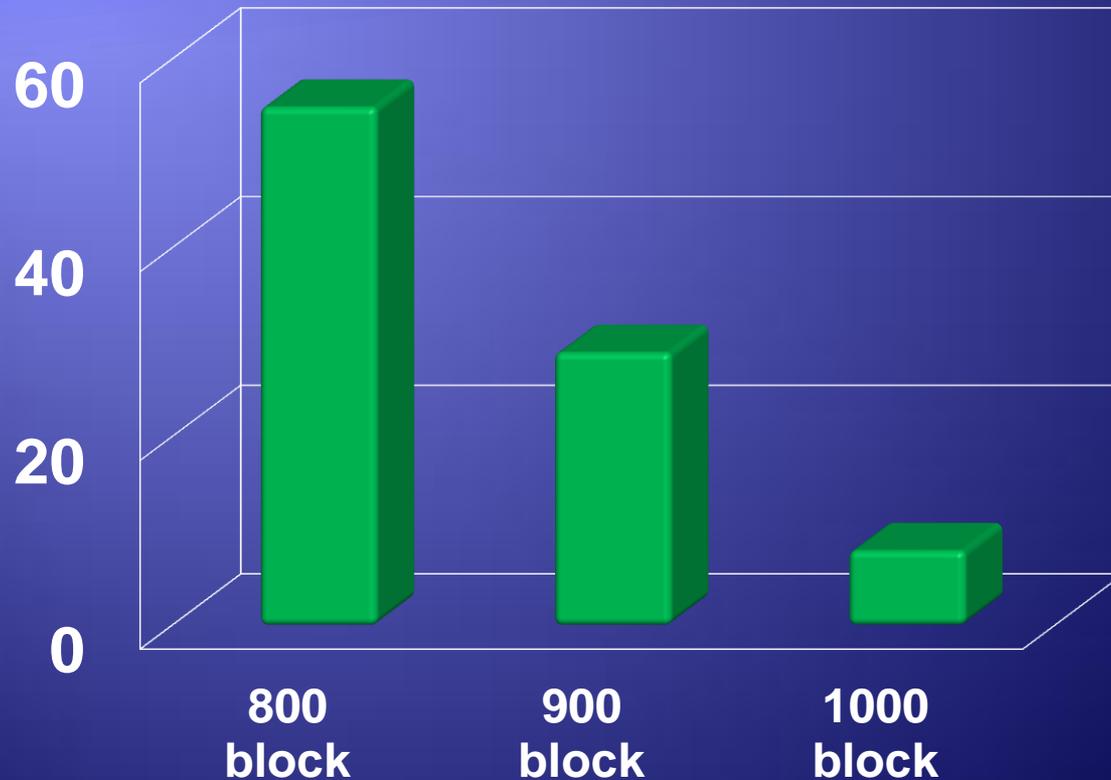
Underlying Issues – Sagewood

- Lack of guardianship
- Land use conflict
- Environmental design
- Reputation that attracts misconduct
- Garages as accessible party rooms
- Associated conditions
- Deterioration indicates tolerance for disorder



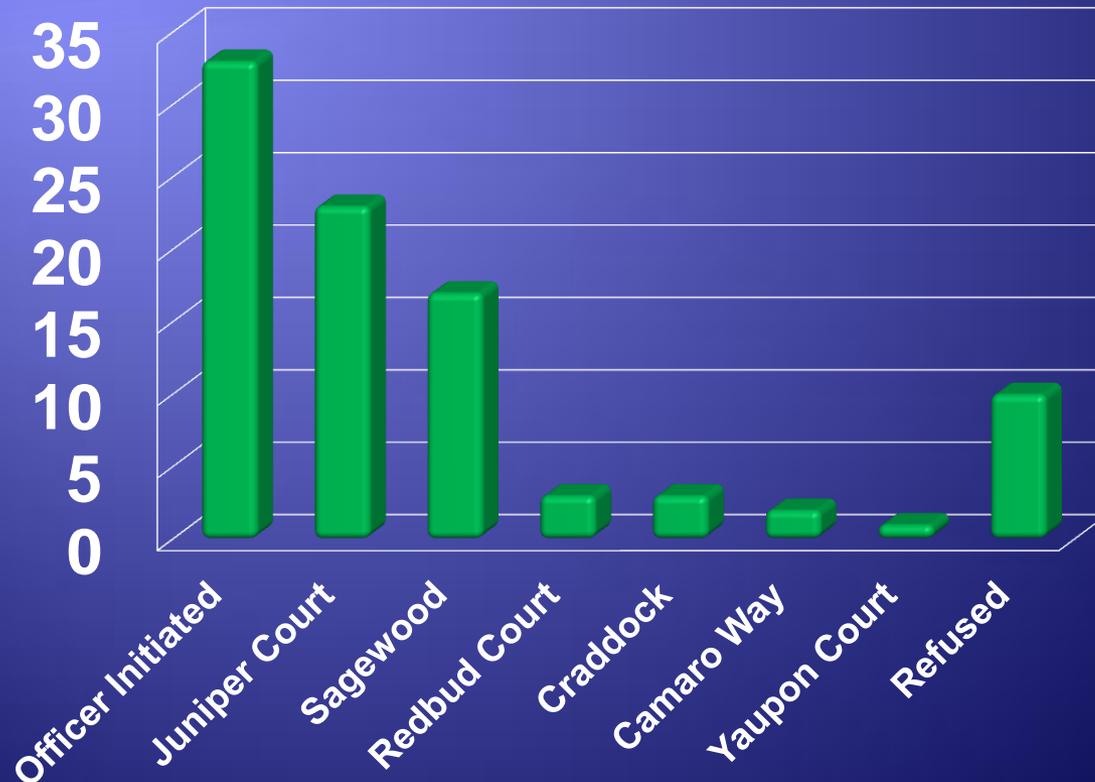
Underlying Issues – Sagewood Geospatial Relationship

By Location of Noise



Underlying Issues – Sagewood Geospatial Relationship

By Location of Complainant



How Police Conduct Business – Call Priority

- **Noise calls categorized as Priority 3 – officer assigned based on call load**
- **Verified noise complaint – personal observation of officer**
- **Analysis of 2007 noise complaints – 38.4% unfounded (not verified)**

How Police Conduct Business – Handling Complaints

Who gets a ticket?

- Officer's first priority is safety
- Focus is education and cooperation
- Prior verified noise complaints at location
- In 2007, 1 of 7 noise complaints resulted in a citation being written



How Police Conduct Business – Tracking Locations/Offenders

- Since 2002, every verified noise complaint location and person identified as host logged and tracked
- Since 2002, notification for any location with two or more verified noise complaints within 60 days
 - Property owner or manager sent letter
 - From 2002 – 2007 more than 670 notices sent to property owners and managers

How Police Conduct Business – Lessons Learned

- Undefined discretionary standard in issuing citations
- Errors in GIS mapping in tracking addresses
- Inconsistent address checks by officers for prior violations
- Minimal crime analysis
- Limited pro-active policing
- Problems not fixed when small
- Improving quality of life in communities requires a shift in ownership of the problem

Ordinances Addressing the Problem of Noise

- **Host Responsibility Ordinance (2002)**
- **Suspension of Electric Service (2002)**
- **Nuisance Determination (2002)**

Interviews – Town and Gown Cities



The most commonly identified problems

- Noise and disturbances from loud parties late at night
- Overcrowded parking on streets, lawns, sidewalks
- Litter, trash, garbage cans left out for days
- Poor upkeep of rental property in residential areas

Interviews

- **City Council**
- **San Marcos Area Board of Realtors**
- **Council of Neighborhood Associations**
- **City and university staff**
- **Sagewood Residents**
- **Property owners and property managers**
- **Student and non-student residents**
- **Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)**
- **Sound Engineer**

Survey of Sagewood Residents

April 2007

107 Residents Surveyed

- 81% male
- 90% student oriented
- 89% enrolled at Texas State
- 53% prior apartment tenant
- 67% not disturbed by noise
- 92% never called police
- 53% SMPD had visited
- 65% little or no change
- 43% SMPD fair
- 33% SMPD too harsh

Our Strengths

- **Citizen, resident, staff, Council interest**
- **We live in a creative community**
- **Strong belief in willingness and ability to affect long-term change**
- **Opportunity to take a global view of a community response to noise and associated conditions in neighborhoods**



RESPONSE

Preparing a Response

We cannot start with a predetermined solution in mind.



Response Criteria

- **Must reduce noise complaints**
- **Must be equitable and balanced to student and non-student residents**
- **Must be cost-effective, practical**
- **Must involve community stakeholders**

Short-Term Goals

- **Modify city's GIS mapping system**
- **Change noise calls to Priority 2**
- **Procedures to check addresses for prior violations/guidelines for citations at repeat locations**
- **Department-wide training on noise and agency response**

Short-Term Goals – Sagewood

- Order maintenance policing
- Strategic traffic enforcement
- Bulk trash pickups, street sweeping, mowing of easements, walk through with violation warnings
- Party-related litter follow-up
- Property owners and managers
- Call analysis with weekly status report to neighbors
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- Sound Engineer

Medium-Term Goals

- **Strengthen relationship with property owners/managers**
 - **Better understanding of economic impact of noise and associated conditions**
 - **Improve marketing strategies**
 - **Early intervention at repeat locations**
 - **Lease violations/evictions for repeat offenders**
 - **Manage gatherings in common areas of apartment complexes**

Medium-Term Goals

- **Partner with Austin Apartment Association**
- **Streamline and change noise and host responsibility ordinances**
- **Form best practice in town and gown relations and problem-solving**

Medium-Term Goals – Sagewood

- **Conduct survey of Sagewood residents**
- **Improve police and resident interactions**
- **Consult professionals in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and sound patterns**

Long-Term Goals

- **Continue pro-active policing at repeat locations**
- **Seek funding sources for Sagewood CPTED physical changes**
- **Implement strategic plan of programs and services to successfully transition students off-campus and into neighborhoods**
- **Increase positive interactions with students and non-students**
- **Combine resources to affect long-term change**

Problem Solving Response

What other communities with similar problems have done

- Responses based on community partnerships, collaboration, use of integrated approach
- Responses preventive in nature
- Educational component/campaign
- Community participates in setting priorities and designating resources
- Responses tailored for specific community



“We are Texas State. We are San Marcos.”
Promoting Positive Relations in Our Community



Mission and Purpose

- **ACT is a collaborative effort of Texas State and the City of San Marcos to work together on common values, mission, and goals.**
- **Creating a student and non-student resident culture of care, cooperativeness and collaboration.**

Creating a Common Mission





Promoting Strong Relationships

- **Education – provide tools for successful neighborhood living experience**
- **Community connectedness – positive interactions with student and non-student residents**
- **Resources – refer to resources and pool resources for educational and community connectedness activities**



Education

- **Changing neighborhoods**
- **What it means to be a good neighbor**
- **Addressing perceptions “this is a college town” and “entitled resident”**
- **Working through conflict and consequences of undesirable choices**
- **Language – “kids” vs. “community members”**



Education Outreach

- Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) correspondence to all students
- VPSA letter to property owners
- Community Alert
- Dean of Students follow-up with student noise violators
- Assistant Chief correspondence for large gatherings

Dear Students:

Hope you were able to get a little rest during your Spring Break! As most of you begin making your housing plans for 2011-2012, I recognize that some of you will live in residence halls; however, most of you will be living off campus. I want to make sure you are aware of the resources that are available to you in the City of San Marcos and at Texas State. Texas State and the City of San Marcos have an active campaign called A.C.T (Achieving Community Together) which helps to promote positive relations between student and non-student residents through education, community connectedness and resources. Our goal is to ensure that both student and non-student residents have a good quality of life together.

The Off Campus Student Services Office has provided the following web links with information that will assist you as you begin making plans for next year and help you interact with your neighbors in a positive manner.

<http://www.lbjsc.txstate.edu/caso/programs/ocss.html>

<http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/student/>

These sources are designed to make you aware of city codes, ordinances, apartment and housing listings, city services, and other important information to assist you. I hope that you talk with your landlord about his/her expectations of you when you sign your lease. If you have any concerns about your apartment complex or neighborhood, contact your local neighborhood association, leasing office, or the Off Campus Student Services Office at 245-3219 or e-mail them at ocss@txstate.edu.

I want you to be informed and I am committed to providing resources that will help you gain the skills, knowledge, and moral character that I believe defines a successful student at Texas State. With all of us working together, you will have an excellent school year both on and off campus.



Joanne H. Smith, Ph.D.
Vice President for Student Affairs

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

601 University Drive | San Marcos, Texas 78666-4616 | phone 512.245.2152 | fax 512.245.7979 | WWW.TXSTATE.EDU

Texas State University-San Marcos, founded in 1899, is a member of The Texas State University System.

All community members in the City of San Marcos are important to us. We recognize that a large number of students make up the citizenry of San Marcos. Texas State has the same goals as the City of San Marcos-to keep San Marcos and Texas State University safe, improve and protect our quality of life and maintain positive and thriving relationships.

The Community Alert page has been developed to allow an opportunity to resolve concerns between city and student residents and ensure compliance with local and state rules and laws. Requests made to Community Alert will on average take approximately 2-4 working days before the student(s) will be contacted. If there is an emergency situation, please contact the San Marcos Police Department.

It is our hope that there have been friendly discussions about any perceived violations of local laws and/or noise disturbances between neighbors.

Person Submitting Concern (*) Indicates required field

Name *

E-Mail Address *

Daytime Phone Number * 512 - -

Nature of Concern *

Please select the concern(s) you would like to bring to our attention.

- Alcohol Violations
- Car/Stereo Noise
- Disorderly Conduct
- Drug Violations
- Hosting Loud Parties
- Residential Noise
- Unrelated Persons Occupancy

Other:

Please explain your concern(s).

Steps Taken to Resolve Concern *

Please assist us by sharing what steps you have already taken to resolve your concerns.

October 14, 2010

Mr. James XXXX
101 University Dr.
San Marcos, Texas 78666

Dear James,

It has been brought to our attention that you have received a noise citation from the City of San Marcos. We are fortunate that Texas State is located in a wonderful community as San Marcos and we want to maintain a great relationship with the city and its citizens. We have a vested interest in keeping San Marcos the beautiful city that it is and in being good neighbors.

We want to remind you that this violation of the city's noise ordinance is not acceptable. One of our goals at Texas State is to teach our students to be responsible citizens where they live, study and work. I am certain that as a Bobcat you understand and I urge you to represent our university well. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to call my office at (512) 245-2124.

Sincerely,



Margarita M. Arellano, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

DEAN OF STUDENTS

601 University Drive | San Marcos, Texas 78666-4616 | phone 512.245.2124 | fax 512.245.1847 | WWW.TXSTATE.EDU

Texas State University-San Marcos, founded in 1899, is a member of The Texas State University System.

From: Dvorak, Lisa

Sent: Friday, October 15, 2010 1:47 PM

To:

Cc: Rick Tarr (Prime Property Mgmt.); Dr.Joanne Smith; Bell, Kenneth; Klett, Bob; Benitez, Daniel; 'Lopez, Michelle M'; Williams, Howard

Subject: Ragewood Posting on Facebook

Hosts: Chris Xxx
Kaleigh XXXXXXXX
Patrick XXXXXX
Aaron XXXXXX
Colleen XXXXXXXX

Dear Chris, Kaleigh, Patrick, Aaron, and Colleen,

Attached is a link to a posting on Facebook for a large gathering hosted by you on October 30, 2010. As of today, more than 2,000 have replied they will be attending.

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/event.php?eid=159988864017637>

The City of San Marcos, Texas State University, and the local property managers have worked extensively to educate party hosts on how to have a responsible gathering. By ordinance, a host is required to:

- Ensure excessive noise (noise heard across a property line) is not produced from the gathering
- Ensure alcoholic beverages provided or served are controlled so alcoholic beverage laws are not violated
- Advise guests streets and driveways cannot be blocked by vehicles or persons attending a party
- Ensure litter related to the party is properly disposed of
- Prevent a party from becoming an unruly gathering

Given the size of the gathering you are promoting, the event will be classified as a Special Event. A Special Event requires you to provide liability insurance, trash collection, portable toilets, security, and other stipulations included in the attached packet.

The event as advertised has the potential to get out of your control and jeopardize the health and safety of your guests and neighbors. If you do not abide by the requirements for a Special Event you face criminal charges and possible lease violations by the property manager. I encourage you to reframe your event and follow the recommendations in the attached Party Smart document.

Commander Bob Klett of the San Marcos Police Department will follow-up with you for your decision for this event. You may also reach him at 512-753-2105.

Lisa Dvorak
Assistant Chief of Police
San Marcos Police Department
2300 IH35 South



Community Connectedness

- Bobcat Build
- Community Welcome
- Housing Fair
- Texas Night Out
- Adopt a Neighborhood/
Adopt a Hall





Resources

- **Vice President for Student Affairs**
- **Dean of Students**
- **LBJ Student Center**
 - **Campus Activities and Student Organizations**
 - **Off Campus Student Services**
- **Attorney for Students**
- **Housing and Residential Life**
- **Community Relations**
- **Associated Student Government**



Resources

- **San Marcos Police Department**
- **Code Enforcement/Neighborhood Services**
- **Texas State University Police Department**
- **Hays County Sheriff's Office**
- **Hays County Dispute Resolution Center**
- **Austin Apartment Association**
- **ACT Ally, Property Managers and Owners**
- **Planning & Zoning Commission**
- **San Marcos Area Board of Realtors**



ACT Ally Program

- To promote collaboration between the ACT Committee and property owners/managers to better educate residents about community expectations and to promote positive citizenship





ACT Ally Expectations

- **Promote a healthy living environment, reduce conflict, and assist residents in how to live in a complex and changing world**
- **Collaborate with Texas State and City officials in an effort to resolve disputes**



Resident Expectations

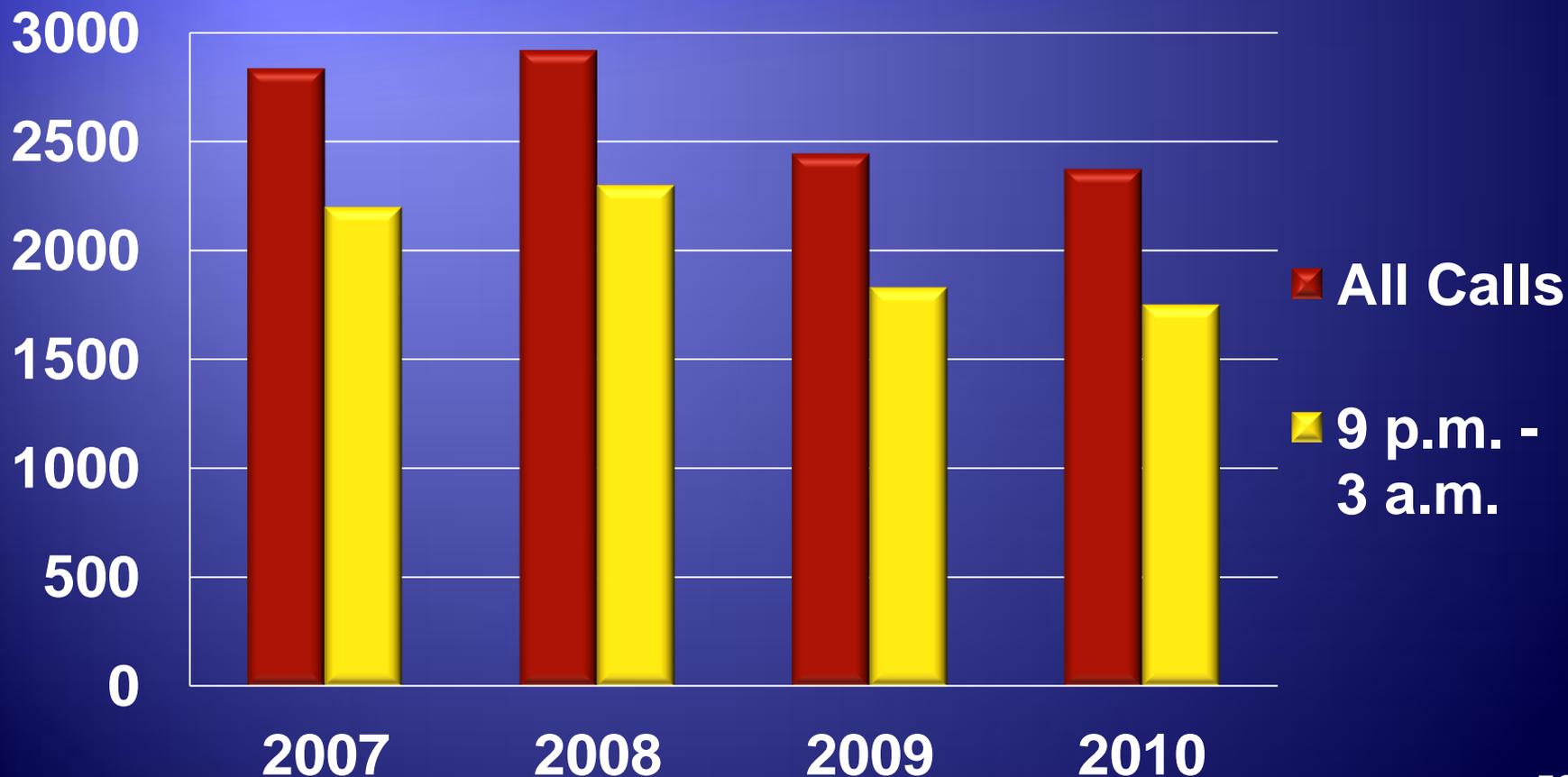
- Know your neighbors
- Keep the noise down
- Make good decisions in hosting a gathering
- Practice courtesy when parking
- Show pride in your neighborhood – clean, green and trash free
- Keep San Marcos safe
- Have a good rapport with fellow residents and law enforcement
- Engage in positive interactions
- Participate in community service



ASSESSMENT

Accomplishments

Noise Calls for Service



Accomplishments

- **Noise Calls – 2007 to 2010**
 - **Reduced 16.3%**
 - **9:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. reduced 20.4%**
 - **Dropped from 8.2% to 5.4% of total calls for service**
 - **Noise no longer the most frequent call type handled by patrol**

Accomplishments

- **Unfounded calls dropped 46.3%**
- **Arrests and citations dropped 43.6%**
- **Repeat noise locations at apartments dropped 58.1%**
- **Student noise violations reduced 40.7%**

Accomplishments

- **Reductions accomplished despite 25.4% increase in total calls for service from 2007 to 2010**
- **Gatherings in common areas of apartment complexes now managed and controlled**

Accomplishments – Sagewood

- **Noise Calls – 2007 to 2010**
 - Dropped 15.2%
- **Citizen complaints dropped 27.1%**
- **Repeat locations dropped 83%**
- **Sagewood no longer in the top ten locations of citizen-generated calls for loud noise**

Creating New Traditions



**There is a strong commitment by all involved
to make this campaign
the culture of San Marcos**

Continuing Assessment

Annual evaluation to determine whether goals and objectives are attained

- **Reduce the problem/fewer incidents**
- **Reduce the harm created by the problem**
- **Deal with the problem better**
- **Problem handled by those best equipped to deal with it**
- **Improve neighborhood appearance**
- **Citizen satisfaction**

Continuing Assessment

Annual review to augment the plan

- Manage displacement of large scale gatherings
- Track criminal activity at ACT Ally properties
- Broaden the scope of educational efforts
- Enhance existing relationships to tackle emerging problems
- Create new avenues for affecting cultural change

Civic Responsibility Global Citizen

**Engaging the community provides
meaningful service to the public**

**On-going collaboration
between the City of San Marcos,
Texas State University and the community
will affect long-term change**

Questions and Answers



Contact Information

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