

CHAMPLIN POLICE DEPARTMENT

LIVABLE HOUSING UNIT

JULY 18, 1997

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ABSTRACT

The Champlin Police Department over several years was noticing an increase in calls for service to multi-housing areas, also the appearance of the buildings were deteriorating. A task force was put together to find a solution to the problem.

After studies were conducted to validate the suspicions of the department, the Champlin Police Department formed the Livable Housing Unit. The Livable Housing Unit was to work with the managers and owners of the multi-housing areas in an effort to reduce the number of repeat calls for service and to improve the appearance of the buildings.

In the short time that the unit has been operating calls to some of the buildings have already shown a decline. Evaluations will be conducted over the next three years to determine the effect of the program and to make adjustments as needed.

SCANNING

The Champlin Police Department over the past several years was seeing a change in calls for service to multi-family homes, the calls were becoming more frequent to the same buildings causing a drain on the departments resources. In turn these same buildings were also becoming noticeably deteriorated both on the exterior and in the units itself.

In 1995 a survey was conducted on a equal number of apartments to single family homes, the calls for service at this time was twice as many to single family then to multi-family. A similar comparison was done on October 26, 1996, of 144 apartment units compared to 166 single family homes. The result was that the number of calls to multi-family homes were 352, while the number to single family homes were 174. The time period of the survey was from 10-01-95 to 09-30-96.

The above survey was conducted after a task force of counsel members, EDA board members, and city officials, along with the Chief of Police reviewed a proposal to fund a multi-family housing policing program. The program was to work closely with multi-tenant building owners as well as troubled single family neighborhood.

The task force also concluded that the calls were of quality of life issues along with repeat nuisance calls and the visible deteriorated condition of several buildings.

ANALYSIS

The history of the problem started in the late 80's with the building of several new additional apartment complexes in the city. The most recent addition came in the form of four buildings with a total of 144 units, at these buildings calls were becoming more frequent with repeat calls to the same units and calls becoming more serious in nature.

Through the review of reports and speaking with the officers it was determined that the offenders were not only the youth in the buildings, but ranged from the adult renters to their children. The Champlin Police Department found that not only were the tenants being the victims, but also the perpetrators, and as stated earlier both our victims and offenders ranged in age from the young to the adults.

To adequately address the problem The Champlin Police Department conducted a study over several years to see where our resources are being used. The first study revealed that twice the number of calls were to single family homes compared to multi-family homes, the second study conducted over a time period from 10-01-95 to 09-30-96 showed that calls were up to multi-housing. During this time frame multi-housing area had 352 calls for service compared to single family homes at 174 calls for service. The homes studied for this survey are located in the center of the city and the apartment complexes studied were also in the center of the city. The Champlin Police Department also found that there are approximately 1146 living units in multi-family buildings in Champlin. The total number of living units (including both single family and multi-family) in the city is 6831, thus multi-family units represent 16.7% of the total number. These 16.7% of the total units accounted for 8.8% of the total calls for Police service in 1995, the percent of total calls for Police service in multi-housing rose to 9.4% in 1996, even though the total

number of calls declined in the city wide by over 900 calls. Along with the rise in calls for service, the building were showing signs of decay. The building managers and owners of some of our larger units were not keeping the appearance up on the outside along with routine maintenance inside the buildings. Security doors intended to keep unwanted persons out were often broken, holes were found in the walls and lighting inside and out was poor, the results of these few problems was unsafe conditions for the tenants and there visitors.

When problems arose in and around the multi-housing areas the patrol officers would respond and take care of the situation. What we were finding is that on the repeat calls that would range in time and we would have several different officers that would respond and since the calls were of minor incidents the information was not being relayed to each shift. This brought on the problem of officers responding to the calls and not knowing the background, in most cases warnings and advisories were given to the offenders of repeat calls instead of more severe action being taken.

RESPONSE

After seeing the rise in calls and repeat calls becoming more frequent the response was to initiate the buildings causing the problems into a program already in place in the Champlin Police Department called POPS CASES. Problem Orientated Policing (POPS) deals with address that generate 10 or more calls for service. When an address reaches this point a officer is assigned to work with the residence to find a way to reduce the number of calls, this program has a profound effect to most address. When dealing with the multi-housing areas not only were the calls increasing but the buildings were deteriorating in appearance, the officer assigned the POPS case for the building could have an effect on the calls but still the appearance issue remained.

It was at this point that Chief Allen Garber initiated the Livable Housing Unit, the intent of the unit was to act as one resource for the managers to come to for their problems. The Livable Housing Unit is also responsible for the investigation of crime that occur on multi-housing areas, with one officer responsible for the incidents that occur in the multi-housing areas this officer will be aware of the problems that occur ranging from the minor incidents to the major problems. The unit was also expanded to cover single family homes in neighborhood that are rented, there have been instances were a homeowner will rent their property out and the renters will not take pride in the area or property. The effects of this is one home in the area that is not maintained, this not only lowers the property value, but causes tension among the neighbors.

The goals of the Livable Housing Unit are to reduce repeat calls for service city wide by 25%, and to reduce calls to multi-housing areas by 5% over the past year. The officer working the Livable Housing Unit will also be responsible for the enforcement of the property maintenance code which

in turn will improve the appearance of the buildings. Another goal of the unit was to have 100% of the multi-housing units involved in the Crime Free Multi Housing Program, to accomplish this the Champlin Police Department sent the officer involved to Mesa Arizona to learn first hand the operations of Crime Free Multi Housing.

The next step to initiating the Livable Housing Unit was the funding, the City of Champlin with approximately 21,000 residence, could not afford to take a person from patrol and assign them to the unit even though the unit was deemed valuable. To solve this the Champlin Police Department looked to grants for assistance, the police department was awarded a Federal Universal Hiring Grant in 1996 of \$75,000. The Champlin Police Department also turned to the Champlin Economic Development Authority, the EDA also saw the benefits to the program and allocated \$53,394.00 toward the program with a total budget of \$128,394.00 for the next three years. The funding was accomplished with using very little city tax dollars and none were used from the police departments budget.

ASSESSMENT

The results of the Livable Housing Unit are just beginning to be seen, the unit is in its first year and already calls to some of the most troubled areas are down. The Livable Housing Unit has made contact with building managers and owners and have received commitments from some of the owners and managers to become part of the Crime Free Multi Housing Program. The impact of this program has reaches past the owners and managers to the tenants, on several occasions tenants have remarked on how much better living conditions have improved.

Over the next year the Livable Housing Unit will be evaluated by on outside consultant to see the impact the program has had on the department and the community. The Champlin Police Department will be utilizing Dr. Robert Pockrass and the League of Minnesota Cities to evaluate the program.

Over the next three years the unit will be monitoring calls to multi-housing areas to measure the results of the program, in turn calls should be lowered. Other means of measuring the effects will be seen in the appearance of the buildings. During this time the program will be evaluated and adjustments may have to be made to ensure that the program is doing what the intent is. After the three years is should be seen that the program is a valuable asset to the department.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

The Livable Housing Unit consisted of one officer being assigned to the program.

The officer involved in the program received training in Crime Free Multi-housing and will attend the COPS Conference to be held later this year.

The officer was given the opportunity to start a program from its conception.

The issues and problems identified were that of poorly maintained buildings and increased calls.

The program is funded entirely without department funds, the program is funded by the Champlin EDA and a grant from the Federal Universal Hiring program.

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