JULY 18, 1997

# Prepared for the:

# Police Executive Research Forum

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#### **ABSTRACT**

### A. **SCANNING:**

Crime and violence continued to rise in a Las Vegas Housing Authority complex in spite of four years of creative policing and intense patrolling.

### B. **ANALYSIS:**

For four years the police department has tried various programs and concepts to combat violent crime, drug activity, and drug dealing. The underlying cause appeared to be:

- 1. Tenants were out of control.
- 2. Las Vegas Housing Authority not aggressively following state and federal law for selection and eviction of tenants and not enforcing their own policy and lease agreements with the tenants.

### C. **RESPONSE:**

Provide a united front by pooling resources between the Las Vegas Housing Authority (LVHA), the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD), and the City of Las Vegas. Aggressively attack the root problem and hold other public agencies accountable to do the same. Plan and implement a three-phase long-term approach including 24 hour security, resident access lists, evictions, designations as drug free zones, resident contact programs, CPTED, and foster a partnership with public agencies and the residents in the Weeks Plaza, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods.

### D. **ASSESSMENT:**

From April 30 through June 30,1997, no violent felony crimes were reported compared to eight reported shootings or stabbings during the month of April. A drop of 63 percent in calls for service over the evaluation period occurred. Public response was evaluated in Weeks Plaza and the surrounding areas by LVMPD, LVHA, and City of Las Vegas. The response was overwhelming and Weeks Plaza is virtually crime free at this point.

#### DESCRIPTION

### A. **SCANNING:**

What was the nature of the problem? In spite of three years of intensive police presence and creative policing technics in a project known as "Weeks Plaza" violent crime continued to rise at an alarming rate. Shootings and open air drug dealings were common place and the residents live in fear. The problem was identified by area patrol officers, the news media, City council, and residents in the projects, as well as the surrounding areas. The citizens, police, and city were frustrated. This particular location was selected because no matter what approach the police took crime and violence continued to rise.

#### B. ANALYSIS:

Weeks Plaza is a family complex run by the Las Vegas Housing Authority. The LVHA is an independent agency and is not governed by the police or City of Las Vegas. The complex consists of 184 units and has a population of approximately 504 people, mostly women and children. Since March 1994, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department has maintained volumes of meticulously cataloged notes, reports, tenant surveys, directed patrol activities, crime statistics, etc... In addition to this data, federal and state laws were reviewed concerning public housing and the policies of the LVHA were inspected.

How long has Weeks Plaza been a problem? The police have documentation since March 1994 showing he effects of crime and gang activity in the area. The complex received the street name of "Third World" due to the large number of gangs operating in the confines of the complex. Over sixteen gangs are known to frequent or operate in the area with little interference from residents or police. The crime concerned the police department so much that two police officers were assigned fulltime, one day shift and one swing shift, from March 1996 to Mach 1997.

What harms have resulted from the problem? Not just Weeks Plaza was affected by the crime, but surrounding residents have long been victims and complained about drugs, crime, and plummeting property values. Shootings, drug dealing, and police foot pursuits were common. Directly across from the complex, an elementary school practices shooting drills where the children drop to the floor because of suspected gunfire. Quality of life of the residents has deteriorated unless they were inclined to participate in criminal activity. Open discussions have been ongoing with residents, politicians, police, school district officials, and the LVHA. Most of those accomplished small goals, but the violence continued.

What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying conditions that precipitated

the problem? After all the information was evaluated, it appeared almost every community policing project, survey, incarceration of offenders (zero tolerance), public meeting, partnership "knock and talk" had failed. One officer was given a department commendation for community service in an off-duty status due to the number or programs he began. After inspecting all the data the police, housing authority, and public problems were one and the same.

- 1. Many of the residents at Weeks Plaza and their guests were out of control.
- 2. The federal, state, and housing authority's own policies and leases specifically addressed the consequences of crime for public residents.
- 3. For some reason these laws and policies were not being aggressively addressed.

The only alternative not tried in the past was actually holding the Las Vegas Housing Authority to their own policies, procedures, and federal and states laws governing all public housing.

### C. **RESPONSE:**

How did you develop a response as a result of your analysis? In April 1997 there were eight reported shootings or stabbings in Weeks Plaza. After our analysis it was obvious that crime had to be curtailed and the residents given some peace. If the housing authority had rules and laws that would control the area, but were not enforcing them, he police and city had to somehow acerb that authority until control and order was restored. The response had to be swift, overwhelming, and encompass housing as a privilege not a right. "If your going to live here, you MUST behave!" It was also determined that a public united front between the City of Las Vegas, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, and the Las Vegas Housing Authority were a must at the initial stages.

### Phase I

On April 30,1997, all police officers were informed of the upcoming project and tactical plan (see attached). On May 1,1997, sixteen large concrete freeway barricades were dropped at all three entrances to Weeks Plaza. The placement of these barricades was not approved by the housing authority. The barricades were placed in such a way that there was only one way in or out. Housing authority hired three security guards to man the one entrance gate and the other barricaded areas twenty-four hours a day. All residents had to show picture identification to get on the property and security checked the ID against a housing list. All visitors had to have their names added to an "access list" by a resident prior to the May 1 deadline and have picture ID. If their name was not on the access list

or they had no ID, they were not allowed on the property. Security was backed up by a bike squad made up of police officers from Downtown Area Command's Problem Solving Unit. Phase one of the project was started on a Thursday night and the bike squad stayed until Sunday morning for maximum shock value. The immediate effect was extremely successful. The area was like a ghost town. All outside influences were eliminated before they came on the property. During the four-day period there were one battery and four domestic disputes. No violent crime was reported and no gunshots were heard.

### Phase II

Phase II consisted of designating the area as a "drug free zone," officers going door-todoor contacting residents and passing out flyers detailing the changes, and foot patrol by Community Policing Officers. Visitor rules were relaxed, but visitors must have picture ID and be logged by security. More importantly, contacts with residents and visitors by patrol officers were investigated. Local background checks were completed and a high incident of career criminals was determined to be residing in or visiting Weeks Plaza. When a career criminal was found, a letter was sent by the police to the LVHA. The letter stated that state and federal law prevents this person from getting public housing and should be evicted (see attached). Secondly, specific addresses were checked for high calls for service. If an address showed a high number of calls over a year period involving drug or violence, housing authority was sent another letter asking to evict. In these cases, the resident often did not have a significant criminal history, but their visitors did. This phase also consisted of increased lighting, painting of buildings, better address numbering, including rooftop, and increased resident-police interaction. The Community Policing Officer and the LVHA site manager wrote the post orders for security (see attached)

### Phase in

Phase III consisted of analysis over the first two months of the project and a community cleanup. On July 12, 1996, LVMPD officers and 123 recovering alcoholics and drug addicts from Transitional Living Communities were sued into Weeks Plaza for a huge community cleanup and B-B-Que. LVMPD took a lead role in the planning of the event, getting cleanup volunteers, providing security, and setting the example in community service (many officers were off-duty). LVHA provided all the tools, food, paint and very nice "tenant expo." The city of Las Vegas provided entertainment, a trash pick up, B-B-Que items, and organized a cleanup in the area surrounding Weeks Plaza. Phase III included follow-up on eviction letters, increased background checks, and meeting with LVHA Operations Manager and Site Manager on an increased basis.

What difficulties were encountered during response implementation? The difficulties were minor and mostly dealt with the time line LVMPD and LVHA developed concerning CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design), which included increased lighting, gate completion, painting, raising walls, and moving a pay phone to a safer location (which was riddled with bullets). Another setback has been the "formal hearing" granted to residents who request it after being served an eviction notice. The hearing officer (LVHA employee) has overturned several contrary o state and federal law. We are actively following up on these cases, but might have to contact a judge to issue a "Write of Mandamus" in these cases. Although we have applied a great deal of pressure in the above difficulties, they are LVHA issues that we have no direct control over.

### D. ASSESSMENT:

The project was evaluated in two areas: Citizen response and crime statistics. Citizens in Weeks Plaza and in the surrounding area were contacted by LVHA, LVMPD, and City of Las Vegas. Teachers at Walter Bracken Elementary School reported less violence and aggression in the school and gave drawings and notes to local politicians about how they feel "safe" now. These were spontaneous reactions from the children and not asked for by teachers. Residents reported "being able to bring my kids to live with me" and many of these human interest stories were profiled on the local news stations. Residents and the media referred to Weeks Plaza as "Las Vegas's newest gated community." Local property owners were contacted, who stated they finally felt some relief from the prior criminal onslaught spilling onto their properties.

Prior to the initiative the complex was void of family activity and children, and officers reported only groups of unsavory youth and groups of adults lurking in the areas. Many people reported areas like the playground and in front of the schools as high robbery areas that were not reported to the police. After the project began, families returned. Children were seen riding bicycles, playing basketball, and constructing homemade tether ball games with plastic bags tied together hanging from trees.

The crime statistics really showed the picture of the successful mature of the initiative. From April 30 to June 30,1997, we had a drop of 63 percent in calls for service. There were no reported violent felonies compared to the eight reported shootings or stabbings the month before the project was begun. No felony reports were taken by police in May or June 1997 (see attached).

One additional note is that routine patrol became nonexistent except calls for service. We did not expect this and we are looking at ways to encourage them to routinely patrol the area. The patrol officers are extremely excited about the success of the operation and

may feel their presence is not needed.

Was there a concern about displacement? Displacement was a major concern by the police department. We observed a lot of U-Haul trucks moving residents (or their illegal roommates) out of the area. Our main concern is that they would be given housing in other LVHA complexes. We already know of one career criminal who has been moved for a sudden "medical condition" that surfaced. We will be monitoring these cases and hope the housing authority does also.

Will your response require continued monitoring or a continuing effort to maintain the results? The Weeks Plaza Initiative will be an ongoing process. It is our firm belief that if LVMPD does not take a lead role in this partnership with LVHA, Weeks Plaza <u>will</u> go back to a gang ridden, crime infested, dangerous place to live.

# **ATTACHMENTS**

March 3,1997	Weeks Plaza Update	
May 6,1997	Monthly Statistics	
June 3,1997	Monthly Statistics	
June 9,1997	Letter reference evictions	
July 9, 1997	Monthly Statistics	
	Calls for Service Graph	
July 21, 1997	Letter about excessive police calls	
	Post Orders for Security Guards	

### **JVLEMORANDUM**

**DATE** . : 03/30/97

TO : DTAC Personnel

THROUGH:

**SUBJECT**: Weeks Plaza Update

As most of you know our police department has been concentrating a lot of our efforts to clean up Weeks Plaza. Most of this has been done with little or no help from the Housing Authority. We have found the situation has been deteriorating in spite of our efforts based on LVHA's in-action. The police department and the City of Las Vegas have therefor taken the lead role in making this a safe environment for the citizens. We have adopted several drastic measures that you should be aware of.

On May 1st at 0900 we will be dropping concrete and water filled barricades at all entrances. The far west entrance will be for all vehicle traffic. There will be only one lane open and it will be maned 24hrs by a security guard. In addition to the gate guard there will be 2 additional roving guards 24 hours a day. These guards will not have keys and are there to "observe and report" only, They will have a currant resident list at the vehicle entrance if you need it. Officers (Help Team, CO.P. Officer, and a cadet) will be handing out flyers to all residents detailing the changes. Evictions will be requested by officers through the C.O.P. officer based on patrol contacts and arrests. Forward all arrest paperwork to the C.O.P. officer for back ground checks and eviction requests. All request will be forwarded to Capt. Barker and LVHA will be given these requests on a monthly basis and required to respond. Sgt. Montandon's PSU squad will be in the area on bikes for the first 3 swing shifts to assist security. Security will be given training in the Summons in Lieu of Arrest Trespass procedure. "Drug Free Zone" signs are being hung which will double the penalty for suspects convicted of drug sales.

The above items should detail some of our strategy for the next couple of weeks. Based on what the Housing Authority does or does not do, we will consult with the city and adjust our plan. I appreciate any added effort on your parts. If anyone has ideas which we might implement, please let myself, Sgt. Montandon, or Officer E. Fricker know.

Thanks for your assistance,	DT11 DT21 DT31
$\bigcirc$ $\square$	DT12 DT22 DT32
Lt. C. VanCleef	DT13 DT33 DT34
Lt. C. VanCleef	DT35

### JVIEMORANDUM

**DATE** : 05/06/97

TO : Capt. F. Barker
THROUGH : Lt.VanCleef

**SUBJECT**: Weeks Plaza Update

On 5/1/97 concrete and plastic barricades were dropped at all entrances to Weeks Plaza. B-More Security reinforced the entrances with 3 armed security guards. The far west entrance was the only vehicle traffic entry/exit point. Security conducted checks of all incoming cars and pedestrians against a list of residents and authorized guests. If they were not on the list they were not allowed in.

During the period 5/1-5/4 (Thur-Sun) Metro officers wrote 27 citations and made 2 misdemeanor arrests for traffic violations. Four evictions were begun on apartments with high drug/criminal activity.

The statistics from crime analysis revealed that over the 4 day period there was one battery and one domestic dispute resulting in arrests. The only other calls were 3 other domestic disputes. No felonies, violent crime, or shootings were reported to the police.

Over the next three days tenants, maintenance, school personnel office staff, and surrounding houses were contacted. They also reported that Weeks Plaza was extremely quiet and did not hear any gunfire or other disturbances. The response to the actions taken thus far was overwhelmingly positive. Although there is much left to do, the opening actions taken by LVMPD, LVHA, and the City of Las Vegas have had a stunning impact on crime in Weeks Plaza.

Eric Flicker

DTAC/ C.O.P. Coordinator

# M E MORANDUM

**DATE** : 06/09/97

TO : Laura McGce, Operations Manager, LVHA

SUBJECT:

During a criminal investigation, officers of Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department came in contact with the above subject, who resides at 2710 Searls, apt 3. A routine records check showed that her criminal conduct violates NRS 315.011, HUD guidelines, and LVHA policy and lease agreements.

Based on our findings, "HAcontinued housing at Weeks Plaza puts the other residents in grave danger of physical hanrTHer criminal history reflects a propensity for violence and her housing is disrupting the harmony of law abiding citizens of Weeks Plaza. We are therefore asking that she be immediately considered for removal from public housing. An updated criminal history can be obtained, at no charge, by contacting Arlene Ralbovsky, Director of Records at 229-3420. Your continued cooperation in matters such as these will continue to make Weeks Plaza a safe place for your valued residents.

Eric Fricker P# 2664

C.O.P. Coordinator/ DTAC

CC:

Capt. F. Barker Lt. VanCleef

Frederick Brown John Phillips

# LAS VEGAS METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT Memorandum

**DATE** : 06/03/97

TO : Capt. F. Barker THROUGH : Lt. VanCleef

**SUBJECT**: Stats on Weeks Plaza

Through a cooperative and concentrated effort between Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, City of Las Vegas, and the Las Vegas Housing Authority, a 51% overall decrease in calls for service has been accomplished. The months compared were April, 1997 (the month before the barricades and security were added) to May, 1997 (the month with some of the new security measures in place) .Additionally, there was only **one** reported felony crime (a burglary committed by a boyfriend of the resident), a 92% decrease in shots fired and gun calls, 47% decrease in domestic violence, 67% decrease in batteries, and no reported shootings/stabbing compared to 8 reported in April.

The following is a breakdown of some of the monthly stats:

	<u>APRIL 1997</u>	<b>MAY 1997</b>
Batteries	6	2
Reported Shootings/ stabbing	8	0
Domestic Disputes	15	8
Stolen Vehicles	1	0
Shots Fired/Gun Calls	12	1
Robberies	1 (4 reported in March)	0
Arson	1	0
<b>Total Calls for Service</b>	108	53

LVHA also related that each month approximately 50 apartment windows are broken. During May only 3 were broken (94% decrease). LVHA maintenance also related that every vacant apartment has been ransacked and broken into on multiple occasions but during May, no vacant apartments were vandalized. It should be noted that these incidents are not reflected in the figures above because they were not reported to the police.

Phase II of the project is presently in progress and includes: LVHA and LVMPD providing written guidelines for the security company to follow, attempting to get the access gates completed, and evicting career criminals and tenants who don't meet federal housing standards,

and providing tenants with LVHA identification if they have no other means of identifying themselves.

The operation has been, and continues to be a huge success. An overwhelming majority of the residents also support this cooperative effort to provide a safe public housing complex, free from crime, violence, and drug related activity. The third stage will be a community clean-up and barbeque when the fences are complete.

Eric Fricker #2664

Community Policing Coordinator/DTAC

# MEMORANDUM

**DATE** : 07/09/97

TO: Capt. F. Barker
THROUGH: Lt. C. VanCleef

**SUBJECT**: Monthly Status Report, Weeks Plaza

The Weeks Plaza Las Vegas Housing Authority complex continues to show a continued dramatic drop in calls for service. For the month of June there were 39 total calls for service compared to April when there were 108 calls for service (drop of 63%). Additionally, there has been a drop of 26% in calls for service from May to June (53 to 39 calls).

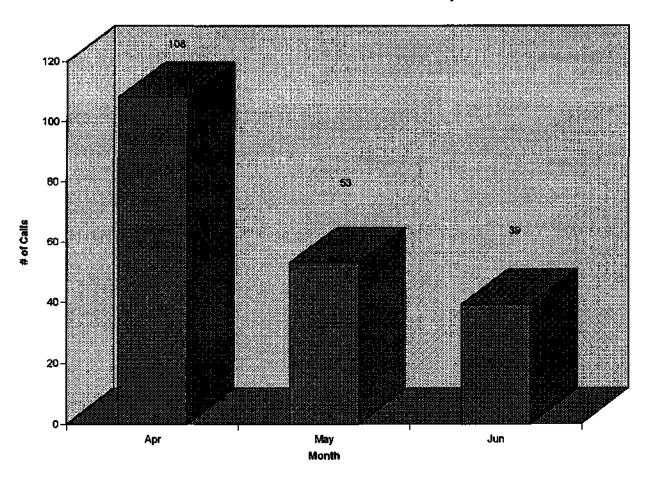
For the month of June there were no violent felonies. Two burglaries were reported but one victim refused a crime report and the other appeared to be out of town. Most of the calls were Domestic Violence (8 calls), Loud music (5 calls), and 911 disconnects (5 Calls). Two calls were for shots fired or a person with a gun but when officers arrived no witnesses, suspect, of evidence could be located. Day shift took 7 calls, Swing Shift took 18 calls, and Grave took 14 calls.

One of the most significant successes is that security has not been involved in any physical altercations, of any kind, in the two months that this project has been in effect.

Eric Flicker

C.O.P. Coordinator/DTAC

# Weeks Plaza Calls for Service April June 1997



# MEMORANDUM

DATE : 07/21/97

TO : Laura McGee, Operations Manager, LVHA

SUBJECT: 2828 Valley St.

During a criminal investigation the address at 2828 Valley St. was discovered to have a large number of call requiring a police response. Over a 9 month period officers of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department responded to this location 9 times. The calls ranged from attempted murder to disturbance calls. In addition, there were 3 incidents of drug related activity. The calls were recorded as follows:

961016-0704 disturbance 961022 0216 domestic dispute 961027-1315 alarm 970123-2213 assist citizen 970422-0977 narcotics 970516-2061 disturbance 970519-0580 narcotics 970521-1149 narcotics 970706-0487 attempt murder

Based on the above it appears that the criminal conduct associated with the residents of 2828 Valley violates NRS 315.011, HUD guidelines, and LVHA policy and lease agreements. We are therefor asking that LVHA perform an updated background check. An updated criminal history can be obtained, at no charge, by contacting Arlene Ralbovsky, Director of Records at 229-3420. Your continued cooperation in matters such as these will assist in making this housing complex a safe place for your valued residents.

Eric Fricker

C.O.P. Coordinator/DTAC

### **DRAFT**

### MAIN GATE ACCESS

The following Standard Operating Procedures were developed to aid the Housing Authority and to help ensure all residents will have access to a safe environment, free from violence, alcohol abuse and drug related activity.

### **SECTION 1**

### ALL ADULTS MUST HAVE A VALID FORM OF PICTURE IDENTIFICATION.

### ARTICLE #1 ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF PICTURE IDENTIFICATION:

- Drivers license and/or state identification.
- Passport
- Military identification
- Immigration Identification
- Housing Authority Identification
- Sheriffs Card

### ARTICLE #2 IDENTIFICATION NOT ACCEPTABLE:

- Any type of check cashing card
- Health Card
- Social Security Card
- Credit Card
- Membership identification

### ARTICLE #3 PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION: RECOGNITION

Personal identification is when the Security Guard assigned to the entrance gate, allows persons on the property based strictly on recognition. This recognition is only to be used for Head of Household and the persons listed on the lease. Residents should be expected to show identification when there is a new security guard at the gate.) All other persons wanting access to the development must show valid picture identification as listed in Section 1 Article #1 and be logged in.

### MAIN GATE ADMITTANCE

### **SECTION 2**

### **ARTICLE** #1

### ACCESS TO PROPERTY BY PERSON(S) WHO ARE LISTED ON PROPERTY LEASE:

- Access permitted by personal recognition by the Security Guard or
- Resident shows valid picture identification and it matches the information obtained from the Daily Log-In Manual, hereafter referred to as DLM.

### **ARTICLE #2**

### ACCESS TO PROPERTY BY ALL OTHER PERSONS:

- Visitor states the **full name** of resident they are here to visit.
- Security must check the Resident Log Sheet, hereafter referred to as RLS, to ensure the visitor is being allowed access to a current valid resident.
- Security Guard requests picture identification as listed in Section 1 Article 1.
- Security Guard refers to the residents' log- in sheet in the DLM and logs in the following information:
- a) Visitor's Name
- b) Date of Birth
- c) Time of gate entry
- d) Date of gate entry
- e) Type of picture identification used
- f) Vehicle license plate number

### **ARTICLED**

Security must notify management of any persons or agencies visiting residents, by documenting the visit on the Officer's Daily Activity Report. Which will be turned in on a daily basis to the management office. Examples of these persons and/or agencies are:

- 1. Probation Officer
- 2. Welfare Case Worker
- 3. Child Protective Service
- 4. Police
- 5. Detectives
- 6. Marshal
- 7. District Attorney's Office

### **GUARD POSTS**

### SECTION 3

### ARTICLE #1

- Security personnel will refrain from congregating near the main gate except during high traffic times.
- It is the responsibility of the residents and guests to have available the picture identification as described above. <u>Security will not allow anyone on the property</u>, who is not a resident, without showing valid picture identification.
- Security must record all vehicle license plates of guests vehicles and guests. Any information not logged will be reported as a disciplinary matter to the Security Company Supervisor.
- Report any suspicious or illegal activity immediately to the police.
- Report any suspicious behaviors and/or acts to the manager by documenting the incident in the Officer's Daily Activity Report.

# **Resident Ground Rules**

THE LAS VEGAS HOUSING AUTHORITY DOES NOT ALLOW THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES. SECURITY MUST MAKE A WRITTEN REPORT AND IT WILL BE CONSIDERED A VIOLATION OF YOUR LEASE AND APPROPRIATE ACTION WILL BE TAKEN TO TERMINATE YOUR LEASE ITWILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE MANAGER ON A DAILY BASIS:

- 1. NO PUBLIC CONSUMPTION OF ALCHOLOLIC BEVERAGES, INCLUDING OPEN ALCHOHOL CONTAINERS
- 2. NO LOUD MUSIC, OFFENSIVE CONDUCT, BELIGERENT BEHAVIOR AND/OR LOUD NOISES THAT DISTURB YOUR NEIGHBORS PEACEFUL ENJOYMENT OF THE PROPERTY.
- 3. ANY ILLEGAL ACTIVITY.
- 4. ANY GROCERY CARTS ON THE PROPERTY. RESIDENTS CAN EXCHANGE THEIR VALID PICTURE IDENTIFICATION FOR BRINGING THE CART ON THE PROPERTY. THE CART MUST BE RETURNED IN ORDER FOR THE RESIDENT TO RECEIVE THEIR IDENTIFICATION.

SECURITY GUARDS ARE REQUIRED TO ADDRESS IMMEDIATELY

# OR CONTACT THE POLICE AND/OR FOR WARD ALL SITE

### VIOLATIONS TO THE PROPERTY MANAGER.

I understand that my primary function is to observe, document, address immediately problems and potential criminal and/or life threatening situations.

Security Guard	Date	
Chief Of Security	Date	
Housing Authority Representative	Date	

# **RESIDENT LOG SHEET**

ADDRESS	ACCOUNT #		
HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	D.O.B		
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMER		Move-in date	
Н	OUSEHOLD MEMBE	<u>ers</u>	
1. NAME	RELATION	SHIP	
D.O.B	SOCIAL SECURITY	Y NUMBER//	
2. NAME	RELATION	SHIР	
D.O.B	SOCIAL SECURITY	Y NUMBER//	
3. NAME	RELATION	SHIР	
D.O.B	SOCIAL SECURITY	Y NUMBER//	
4. NAME	RELATION	SHIP	
D.O.B	SOCIAL SECURITY	Y NUMBER//	