

# DRAKE APARTMENTS

00-07



# HERNAN GURSTEIN AWARD 2000



## SUMMARY:

### *Scanning:*

For much of the 1990's, the Fontana Police Department has been dealing with issues related to criminal activity, especially vandalism, in an area directly across from the City Hall. Over the years, the Police Department received numerous complaints from local business people and area residents about crime in the area. On several occasions those complaints have gone to the City Manager or City Council. Both the complaints themselves, and the fact that racist graffiti, such as swastikas, were being put up on walls across the street from City Hall was a matter of significant concern in the city.

### *Analysis:*

The Drake Apartments had originally been built as a senior citizen complex and the size of the apartments meant they were not really suitable for family living. A combination of factors, including the attitude of the apartment owners, led to the complex being an extremely run down place where dysfunctional families with white supremacist leanings lived. The rest of the neighborhood was relatively quiet with some families, but largely occupied older and retired citizens. Many of those people lived in that neighborhood because of the services available that made that neighborhood ideal for senior living. The general attitude and demeanor of the residents at the Drake Apartments, as well as conflict between them and their neighbors were leading to the problems in that area.

### *Response:*

The best usage for the Drake Apartments was the usage they were originally built for. The generally poor condition of the apartments and the attitude of the existing owners made it unlikely that the usage of the apartments was going to change without significant intervention. The Police Department worked with the Housing Department to develop a strategy to return the Drake Apartment's to its original usage. The City used redevelopment set aside funds to purchase the property, evict and re-locate existing tenants, and rehabilitate the property. The property was then given to a local community based organization with the understanding they would run and maintain the property as a senior housing project.

### *Assessment:*

Since the start of the project we have seen a 60% reduction in reported crime in the area around the apartment complex. There has been a corresponding 33% reduction in total police calls per service in that area. Complaints and incidents of racist graffiti have been all but eliminated. Based on all of the objective criteria that was established at the start of the project, it has been an overwhelming success.

*Scanning:*

Through most of the 1990's, the Police Department has been dealing with issues related to criminal activity, especially various forms of vandalism in and around an area directly across from our City Hall. In the mid 1990's this problem became more severe as some forms of vandalism spread to the City Hall and Police Department complex and swastikas and other racist graffiti were put up on area walls.

Fontana City Hall sits on Sierra Avenue, the main thoroughfare in the City of Fontana, between Upland and Seville Streets. Directly to the east of City Hall is the Police Department building. Directly to the west, across Sierra, is a large superblock area, which contains the Fontana Women's Club, a set of medical office buildings, a church with a daycare center, several single family residences, and one apartment complex. Other single-family residences, small apartment complexes, and a shopping center complex that contains Fontana's main Post Office surround that block area.

Over the years the Police Department received numerous complaints from doctors in the medical office building, managers from the post office, leaders of the Women's Club, and area residents in general about vandalism and other crime in the area. On several occasions, those complaints have gone to the City Manager or City Council. Both the complaints themselves, and the fact that racist graffiti, such as swastikas, was being put up on the walls across the street from City Hall, was a matter of significant concern in the city.

Officers working the area, and the department's Problem Oriented Policing Team had no trouble in determining the basis of these problems were residents at the Drake Apartments, located directly east of the Women's Club and north of the medical

complex. First in 1995 and again in 1997, we worked comprehensive enforcement programs designed to discourage subjects in those apartments from vandalizing or causing other problems in the neighborhood. In each of those situations, the initial increase in enforcement activity seemed to result in an increase in other problems. In early 1996 and again in late 1997, a significant amount of vandalism started occurring to vehicles in the parking lot of the City Hall and Police Department facility. A significant number of man-hours were spent on surveillance's using both officers and non-sworn volunteers with no discernable result. Eventually the vandalism's seemed to stop happening, as subjects living in the Drake Apartments either went to jail on various charges or moved or were evicted. In these situations, the vandalism's taking place at the City Hall and Police Department were similar to the type of vehicle vandalism's that were occurring at the Women's Club and doctor offices that had initiated the enforcement efforts in the first place.

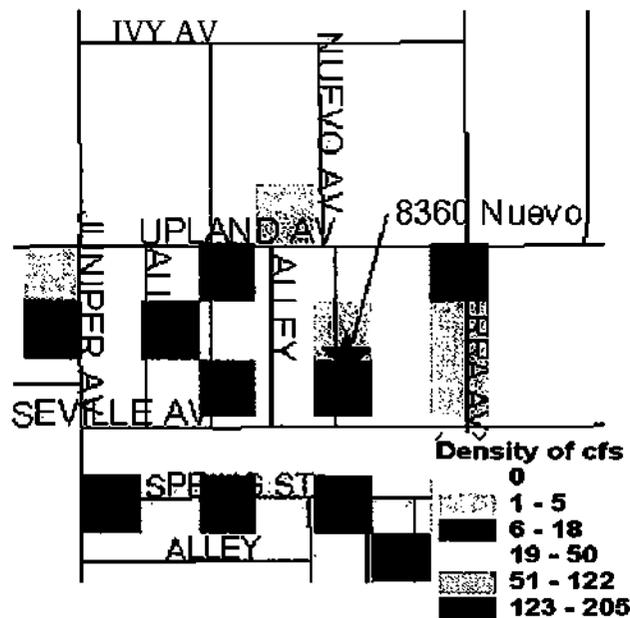
As part of our strategy to deal with problems related to the Drake Apartments, members of our POP team contacted and attempted to work with the apartment complex owners. The owners were never very cooperative, but would when threatened with city code compliance citations and abatement or other civil penalties, ultimately evict tenants that were causing serious problems. Those tenants would then be replaced with other tenants that would cause similar problems. The owner's willingness to cooperate in extreme cases, and our inability to directly prove that the issues in the community were being caused by residents of the Drake Apartments made following through with abatement or other civil remedies impossible.

The Police Department chairs a Community Policing Advisory committee for the city. That committee contains members of the community, a representative from the School District, a representative from the Recreation, Code Compliance and Housing Departments. As part of that committee's efforts, the Police Department decided to work with the Housing Department in order to develop a long-term strategy for dealing with problems related to the Drake Apartments.

*Analysis:*

Several methods were used to determine that the Drake Apartments were in fact the main source of problems in this area. The following density map shows the density of calls for service activity, for a one-year period prior to the start of the project, in the area in and around the Drake Apartments. The red and pink area on Sierra east of the location is the City Hall complex. The Pink area at Upland and Nuevo is the Post Office and shopping center. All of the other areas are residential. The only high-density residential area is centered on the Drake Apartments.

Calls for Service in the area of 8360 Nuevo



A simple survey of the neighborhood also gave a good indication of where our problems were coming from. The area around the Drake Apartments is one of the oldest areas in the central part of our city. Most of the other houses and small apartment complexes in the area are occupied by older and in many cases retired people. The Drake Apartments on the other hand tended to be occupied by families. Most of these families were Caucasian, many with teenagers who professed to be skinheads or "Peckerwoods", which is a local skinhead group.

Early enforcement efforts at the project had at best a mixed result. Initial enforcement effort lead to an increase and a widening of vandalism problems in the area. Ultimately, our POP team working with patrol officers and code enforcement in an aggressive enforcement mode in combination with our efforts to work with the complex owners would temporarily reduce or eliminate the problem. Unfortunately the problems seemed to be reoccurring in 18-24 month cycles.

We were able to deal with problems related to Drake Apartments by putting large amounts of manpower in and around the apartment complex. At that the time we were doing this the cities Code Compliance Unit would put resources into dealing with Code Compliance issues which would have the effect of causing some tenants to move and forcing the owner to evict other problem tenants. Unfortunately, both the Police Department and Code Compliance Unit had other issues to deal with in the city. When the concentrating of significant resources at the Drake Apartments would stop, the apartments would slowly revert back to their original condition and the neighborhood would begin experiencing the same problems all over again.

Working with the City's Housing Unit, a comprehensive analysis was done of the area and the history of the Drake Apartments. The Drake Apartments is a 16-unit apartment complex where the average apartment is a studio apartment approximately 300 square feet in size. The apartment building was originally built in 1928 as a senior citizen's complex. The 300 square foot space is generally adequate for senior usage. The Drake Apartments actually had entire families living in that amount of space. Families that would live in apartments that small tended to do so because that was the only place they could find. As a result of the run down condition of the apartment complex in general, the owner was unable to be too picky about screening tenants that were willing to live there.

A survey of the rest of the area indicated that older retired people mostly populated the area. This particular area is perfect for that senior housing. There is a medical complex adjoining the Drake Apartments. Also adjoining the Drake Apartments is a church and the Fontana Women's Club, which provides services to senior citizens. The Post Office and a large shopping center are also less than a block away.

In essence, the Drake Apartments had developed into a complex of poor, and in many cases, dysfunctional families, located in the center of a retirement community. With the exceptions of the problems caused by the Drake Apartments, the community was quiet and ideally situated for the seniors and retired people. Most of the rest of the neighborhood was well maintained and the Police Department and the City had very few problems with any of the other houses or apartment complexes in the area.

In summary, an analysis of the area revealed several important facts. The Drake Apartments was originally built as a senior complex and was not really suitable for

family living. A combination of factors, including the attitude of the apartment owners led to the apartment complex being extremely run down and a place where dysfunctional families with White Supremacist leanings lived. The rest of the neighborhood was relatively quiet with some families, but largely occupied by older and retired citizens. Many of those people lived and stayed in that neighborhood because of services available that made the neighborhood ideal for senior living.

*Response:*

A long-term response to the problem presented by the Drake Apartments would appear to be obvious based on the analysis. The best usage for the Drake Apartments was the usage that they were originally built for. Apartments that size are adequate for senior living, but not adequate for families. An unfortunate set of historical factors had led to the Drake Apartments being used for family living. The generally poor condition of the apartments and attitude of existing owners made it unlikely that usage of the apartments was going to change without significant intervention.

The Drake Apartments sits in a redevelopment area of the city. California Law requires that a certain percentage of the taxes generated in a redevelopment area be set aside for development of low and moderate-income housing. Like many cities, Fontana prefers to use that set aside money to help revitalize existing low and moderate income housing, as opposed to building additional low income housing. The existing owner of the Drake Apartments would have been happy to accept assistance from the city in fixing this property up, but it was likely the property would deteriorate back to its original state over time.

The city made attempts to find a new owner for the Drake Apartments. Due to the general run-down condition of the apartments and the economic situation in the area we were not able to find a private owner that was willing to come in and buy the property, even with city assistance.

The Fontana Oldtimers Foundation runs several senior complexes in the City of Fontana. Working with them and members of the Women's Club and other area leaders who are interested in the program, the City developed a long-term strategy to return the Drake Apartments to their original usage as a senior citizens complex.

As part of this agreement, the city purchased the Drake Apartments outright from the owner. With the large number of pending code compliance issues at the apartment complex, the city was able to get an extremely favorable price from the owner. The property was purchased using low moderate housing set aside funds so that the purchase did not impact the City's general fund. The city then used the same funding source to evict and relocate all of the existing tenants and rehabilitate the property. We worked with the Women's Club on an agreement to share some facilities, and the Oldtimers Foundation agreed to run the facility as a senior housing complex. The Oldtimers would be given the property in its renovated state if they would agree to maintain the property in that state and maintain it solely as a senior housing complex. In July of 1999, the last tenant was removed from the Drake Apartment complex. In February of 2000, the new Nuevo Street Senior Housing complex was opened as a joint project between the City of Fontana, the Fontana Oldtimers Foundation, and the Fontana Women's Club. Present at that opening were members from each of those groups, as well as doctors from the

medical office complex and other area residents and business owners that had been involved in the project.

***Assessment:***

In order to assess the impact of this project, we decided to do an analysis of the area around the Drake Apartments. The area that we analyzed was the area from Seville to Upland on the north and south and from the west side of Sierra to Nuevo on the east and west. This area included the doctor's office complex, the church and daycare center, the Women's Club and all of the rest of the housing within approximately one block of the Drake Apartments. We analyzed that area for the following factors:

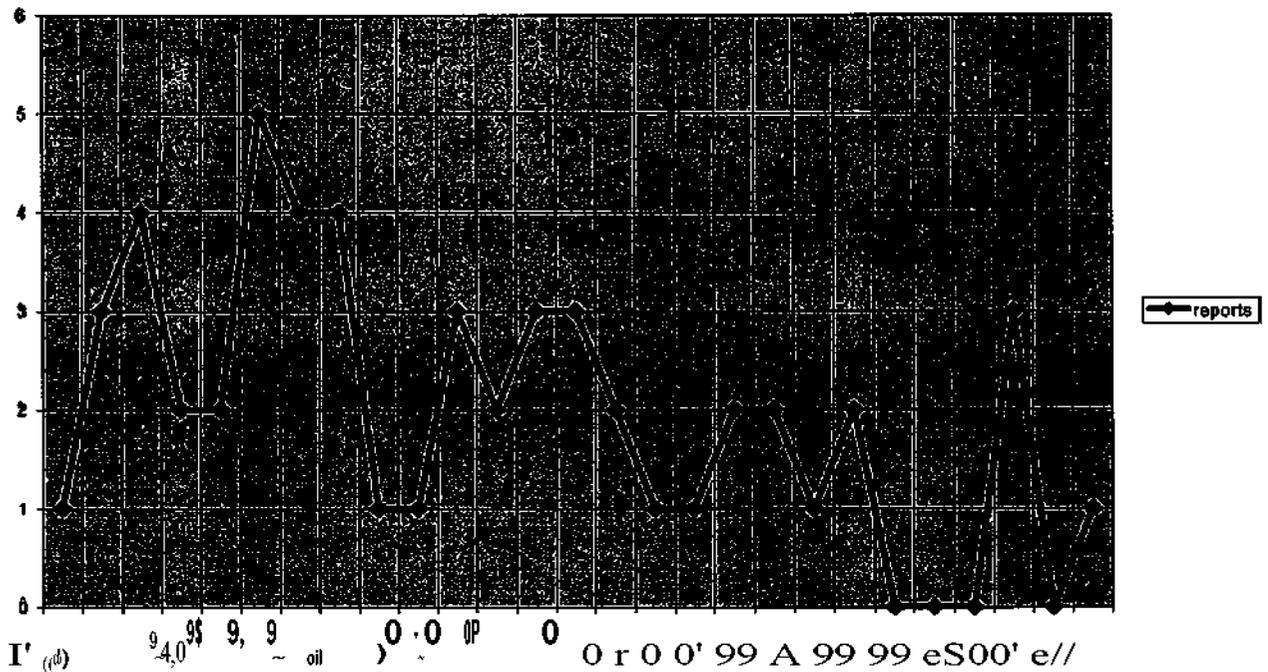
- *Was there a change in reported crime in that area?*
- *Was there a change in overall police activity as measured by calls per service in that area?*
- *Was there a change in the number of complaints from residents in that area or business owners in surrounding areas that appeared to be related to that area?*
- *Was there a noticeable difference in the amount of graffiti, especially graffiti involving racist or skinhead symbols in that area?*
- *Although the City Hall complex was outside the area, we also wanted to see if there was an impact on the vandalism's occurring to vehicles in the City Hall and Police Department parking lot?*

The results of the closing of the Drake Apartments on the neighborhood surrounding them were dramatic and immediate. Obviously, calls for service at the apartments

dropped dramatically once the apartments were empty and later populated by seniors. The true impact of the closure of the apartments is shown by the activity in the superblock area surrounding the apartments.

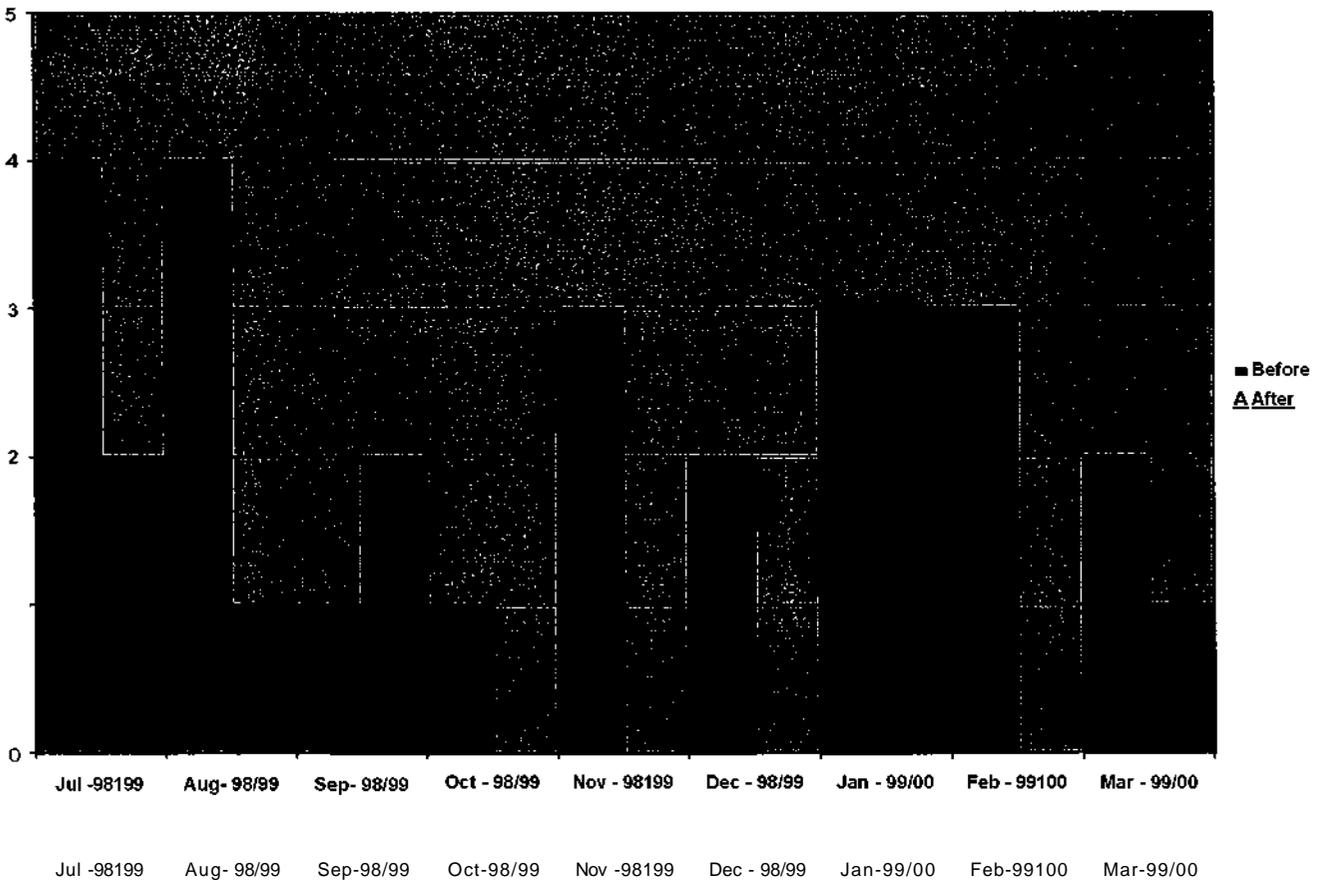
The following graph shows crime reports taken in the area surrounding the Drake Apartments since January of 1998. Our record system does not capture vandalism reports unless a suspect was arrested as part of this data. The data on this chart is mostly major crime reports. This chart shows graphically the change since July of 1999 when the apartment complex was closed. Overall, the monthly average number of reported crimes has dropped 58 percent in the entire neighborhood for the nine month period since July of 1999 compared with eighteen month period prior to that date.

Reports taken in the area of 8361 Nuevo



Since we have nine months of data since the start of the project we compared total crime reports in the area with the same month the year before the project started. We wanted to see if the change in crime reporting remained constant relative to time of year. Once again overall activity as a monthly average has dropped 60 percent in the surrounding neighborhood since the closure of the Drake Apartments.

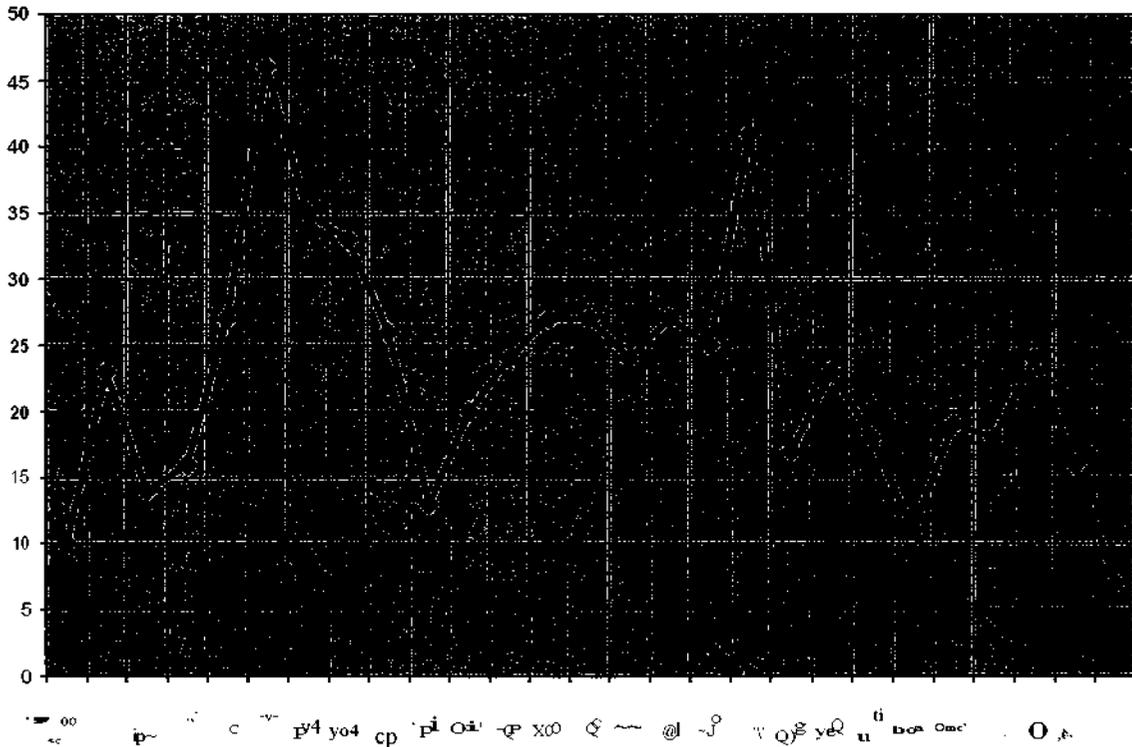
**Reports taken before and after program**



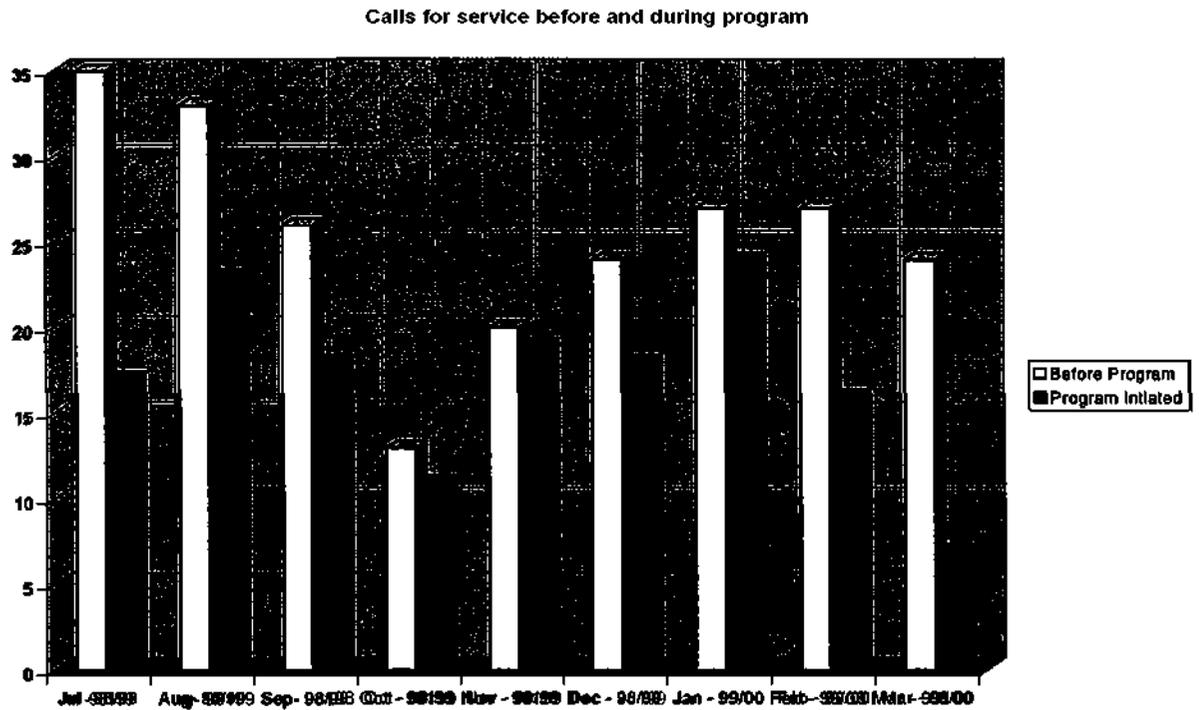
The following chart shows the effect of overall police activity in the neighborhood surrounding the Drake Apartments. This data would include reports of vandalism. The chart covers from January 1988 until March of 2000 the last month data is presently available. The data shows that calls tend to vary from month to month but

there is a downward trend after July of 1999 when the last of the tenants were evicted. As in the analysis of reported crimes we see that the monthly average of total calls for service for the nine month period since July of 1999 has dropped 33 percent compared with the eighteen month period just prior to that time.

**Cfs In the area of 8361 Nuevo**



Once again we looked at total calls for service activity for the same nine month time period before and after the project started. The overall monthly average of calls for service activity has dropped over 33 percent in the surrounding neighborhood when comparing the nine month period since the start of the project to the same nine month period the year before. During that same time period calls for service citywide were up four percent.



Prior to closing the complex, both the Police Department and the City regularly received complaints from citizens in the area, the post office, the Women's Club, and the medical office complex about problems in the area. Since the closure of the Drake Apartments, no one from the City or the Police Department has received any complaints from the area.

Since the closure of the Drake Apartments there has been one incident of racially motivated graffiti in the area. While the project was being renovated, one swastika was drawn on the rear wall of the apartment complex. Since that was painted over, we have had no other incidents of that type of vandalism in or around the former Drake Apartment complex, the Women's Club or medical office building surrounding it.

Whenever anyone comes into our station to make a report, or an officer coming and going from our station makes a traffic stop, our computer system registers this

activity as related to our Civic Center Complex. Because these numbers are so large, it is not practical to make a statistical analysis of changes in activity in or around the Civic Center related to the closure of the Drake Apartments. Since the closure of the Drake Apartments, there has not been one reported incident of vandalism to a vehicle in the City Hall or Police Department parking lot.

Based on all of the assessment criteria that we established, the Drake Apartment project has been an overwhelming success. We now have significantly fewer problems in and around a vital area in the center of our city. We no longer have to allocate significant amounts of police resources to deal with problems in the area. We also provided much needed affordable housing for seniors in our community. These goals were accomplished by a cooperative effort between Police and Housing Departments from the City, various community groups and citizens. We were able to do this with no expenditure of general fund revenues, and a minimal long-term city government involvement.

***Agency and Officer Information:***

Numerous officers in our department had handled problems involving the Drake Apartment complex. The department's Problem Oriented Policing Unit had taken the lead in these problems since 1995. The final effort that led to this project was a result of officers from the Problem Oriented Policing Unit working with the Housing Department through the mechanism of the department's Community Oriented Policing Advisory Committee.

All officers and managers at the Fontana Police Department receive extensive training in Community Policing and problem solving. The department has sent entire

teams, including sworn, non-sworn, volunteer and community members to trainer courses and conferences. All officers have attended advanced officer training in Community Oriented Problem Solving, and are required to attend 8 hours of Community Oriented Problem Solving Training as part of the field-training program. All members of our special operations unit, which includes our POP Team, Gang Unit, Crime Prevention unit, Bike Team, and Traffic Unit, have attended a basic 24-hour problem oriented problem-solving course. All managers and supervisors have received additional Community Oriented Problem Solving training.

All officers are encouraged to participate in the problem solving process. Officers problem solving efforts are evaluated and referred to in each annual evaluation. Evaluating an officer's prior work on problem oriented policing projects is a significant portion of the promotional process. Any officer involved in a Problem Oriented Policing Project that requires additional time, is given time away from patrol duties to work on those projects.

Our officers are all trained to use the SARA model for problem solving. Officers involved in POP projects are expected to fill out a basic POP project form, which is then entered into a computer data base for tracking. Officers addressing similar issues in the future can use that database as a guide for effective strategies that have been used in the past.

The Fontana Police Department has used this model for numerous effective problem-solving programs in the past. We have used the SARA model in principles of Problem Oriented Policing to deal with issues ranging from skateboarders and drag racing to homelessness in our community. The Fontana Police Department has received

several awards in the past at the state, national, and international level for Community Oriented Problem Solving projects and programs. In addition, several members of our department have done presentations on these topics at state, national, and international conferences.

The Police Department and City Housing Department committed personnel time to this program. The actual personnel time spent on the final Drake Apartment program was significantly less than had been committed to problems related to the Drake Apartments in the past. The City used low-moderate income housing set aside funds for all of the financial resources used in this project. Those funds were allocated by the City Council acting as the City Redevelopment agency at the request of both the Police Department and the Housing Department. No additional funds were expended from either the Police Department or the City budget.

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