

Alta Vista Apartments

Summary

Alta Vista Apartments was built in 1962 and is located at 700 18th Street Plano, Collin County, Texas on 5.2 acres. This is a Residential Multi-Family apartment complex with 132 apartments on location. There have been 1266 documented calls for service at this property since January 1993.

In March 2001, Officers of the Plano Police Department began to notice a pattern of sexual related incidents and offenses at Alta Vista. Within a few short months of observation and enforcement, it was obvious that this property would require additional city services in order to be brought up to acceptable community norms. Alta Vista Apartments met the criteria needed for Nuisance Abatement with 6 reports and arrests for prostitution related offenses within a 12-month period.

Scanning:

We noticed that calls for service at Alta Vista Apartments included: Assaults, Burglary of Motor Vehicles, Criminal Mischief's, Gambling, Narcotics, Prostitution, Unauthorized Use of Motor Vehicle, and Weapon offenses. More and more we were seeing and hearing of female subjects walking the complex for the purpose of committing acts of prostitution.

Analysis:

The majority of residents living at Alta Vista Apartments are Hispanic/blue collar workers and families tend to be lower income. Several apartments throughout the complex were leased to "groups" of male laborers who had jobs that paid cash.

A lack of adequate lighting and a seemingly "disinterested" Management Team made this complex a prime location to commit offenses related to narcotics, prostitution, and drinking of alcohol in the area.

Management did not attend Plano Police sponsored meetings like Resident Shield held every quarter at the police department. This meeting is for apartment managers in Plano that updates and educates the managers in offenses in Plano. By disregarding these meetings, management missed out on what was occurring on their property.

A lack of police support and Management empathy led to a breakdown in this apartment community.

Response:

The Neighborhood Police Officer held meetings with apartment managers in his area, coordinated surveillance/special enforcement details and gathered intelligence information from all available resources.

The owner/management met with City Employees and made specific improvements to reduce this problem. Management adopted a "zero tolerance" for repeat violators and evicted problematic residents.

Assessment:

Calls for service/sex offenses were reduced and the exterior improvements to the property enhanced security. Management was open to police involvement and worked closely to reduce all types of problems at the property.

Alta Vista Apartments

Introduction:

Alta Vista Apartments are located at 700 18th St. Plano, Collin County, Texas. This complex is directly adjacent to a separate apartment complex, a hotel, motel and a small strip center. Within the strip center are several small businesses [laundry mat, food service, beer store etc] that cater to the predominantly Hispanic community at Alta Vista Apartments. The 132-unit complex was built in 1962 on 5.2 acres. Alta Vista Apartments has 19 buildings, three laundry rooms, a pool, and an office on the west side of the building. Alta Vista Apartments has 1 manager with an assistant manager and maintenance worker who resides on property. Since the complex is not gate controlled, anyone can easily access the property. Each individual apartment consists of a common area including a kitchen, family room, and a choice of one, two, or three bedrooms. Since parking spaces are limited, each resident is given up to two blue stickers to place on the inside of their windshield in order to show residency. There are also a few parking spaces designated for visitors.

Statistical data compiled from October 1998 through October 2001 discloses that there were 268 calls for police service at this location. There have been 70 offense/incident reports generated as a result of those calls. The offense/incident reports include: Assaults, BMV/Thefts, Criminal Mischief, Gambling, Prostitution, Narcotics, U.U.M.V., and Weapons Offenses. Investigations by Officers of the Plano Police Department indicate that the following incidents occurred on or about the premises:

In January 2001, Officers detained and identified a black female prostitute leaving an apartment at Alta Vista Apartments. The prostitute admitted that she was on property for the sole purpose of prostitution and had been called to the apartments several times over the past year. Two Offense Reports were generated for prostitution, which later led to her arrest in February 2001.

In March 2001, Officers investigated and arrested a black male for Compelling Prostitution at Alta Vista Apartments. Witnesses at the location advised that the black male was going door-to-door "pimping out" a white female prostitute to residents within the complex.

In May 2001, Officers from the Neighborhood Police Officer Unit coordinated and implemented a Special Enforcement Detail at the complex targeting sex offenses. Before the detail began, officers identified several pimps and prostitutes who frequented Alta Vista Apartments. Prior to starting our detail on this date, we had to send a PPD Unit in to stop and talk to a Wm who was already in the complex with a white female.

We designated 3 officers [2 female and 1 male] as "undercover" and 8 additional officers were used as part of an apprehension team, prisoner book-in and transport. Three arrests were made in a very short time; however there were numerous subjects requesting the females meet them inside specific apartments. Due to officer safety concerns, that was not an option. Our detail was forced to end early due to possible gunshots heard in the area.

Obviously, we faced a real problem of prostitution within this complex and needed to act on our information quickly. The following process took place over many months and our efforts are on going. We feel like a difference has been made in this apartment community and the quality of life for residents have improved dramatically.

Scanning:

During the Scanning phase of this project, Officers J. Hernandez #1445, R. Glenn #1520 and S. Kermes #1289 began to evaluate the extent of the problem being experienced at Alta Vista Apartments. Officers started to gather and research all calls for service over the past 3 years to look for a pattern of sexual related offenses. This complex is predominately Hispanic and undocumented workers reside there in large numbers. We were not seeing a lot of calls for service or complaints because most of this activity was accepted and not reported as suspicious. Due to previous contacts, arrests and a constant pattern of white and black females [non residents] seen inside the complex, we determined that there was a prostitution problem at Alta Vista Apartments. In addition, we were concerned over substandard living conditions and the lack of management support in dealing with these issues.

Analysis:

Alta Vista Apartments was quickly acquiring a negative perception by the community and the officers of being a location known for alcohol violations, prostitution, and narcotics. This atmosphere was affecting the quality of life for residents and the community. In addition, the reputation of Alta Vista Apartments being a family oriented apartment complex was being tarnished by the offenses occurring.

During our analysis of the problem, Officer Joe Hernandez determined that the management staff was doing little or nothing to prevent occurrences such as alcohol violations and prostitution. The management was unaware or ignored the problem of too many occupants [primarily single males/laborers] in an apartment and they were the targets of prostitutes.

Our analysis of this problem showed that prostitution was occurring every weekend and at least a couple of times during the week. The summer months were the worst for these types of offenses and enforcement was difficult since each incident occurred inside individual apartments. We concluded that these offenses occurred because several males shared single apartments and females could have several customers in a short period of time with little chance of being caught.

We identified several resources within our Police Department to assist in analyzing our problem. We utilized our Records Division in pulling all available information on calls for service to include any incident on the property, arrests, and field interrogation cards. We used our Municipal Court database to review citations and our Warrant Division pulled every active warrant on subjects who had previously used Alta Vista as a residence. Our Intelligence Unit provided data on active prostitutes and Crime Analysis was very helpful in researching patterns and call types. We gathered information on previous arrests from the Plano City Jail to include book in photo's on subjects we previously dealt with. We sought information and guidance from our Legal Advisor and he provided feedback whenever needed. We also solicited information from officers' previous experience with this property and any subjects they had dealt with related to our problem.

We identified other departments within the city that might be able to assist us. We contacted employees from the Property Standards Unit, Building Inspections, Environmental Health and the Plano Fire Department. After looking at our entire problem, it was clear to us that we needed to precede with Nuisance Abatement against Alta Vista Apartments.

Currently, our Patrol S.O.P. 204.002 specifically addresses the process for proceeding against a property. This is a civil remedy through the State of Texas Attorney Generals Office that could result in property closure. Our interest was change, not closure, yet we determined that this remedy would be helpful in our problem solving efforts. If we were successful, the Attorney Generals Office would not become involved and the property would have benefited from our effort.

Summary of Analysis

Our analysis identified the following key factors:

1. Management was not enforcing their lease policies and they were not actively involved in Crime Prevention.
2. Access into the complex was unrestricted. Due to its location; it was perfect for easy foot traffic access.
3. The management of Alta Vista was not aware of incidents occurring within the complex.
4. A large number of the problems could be attributed to alcohol or drug abuse, and the apartment complex seemed to be attractive to undesirable, often criminally inclined people.

The problem impacted a wide variety of people including other residents, apartment management, and the surrounding community. In addition to a high volume of calls for service, it was determined that a large percentage of the calls for service were actual reportable criminal offenses.

Response:

Upon evaluating the overwhelming problems being experienced at the complex, officers created a list of goals or objectives for their response.

1. Increase the quality of life and create an atmosphere within the complex that would be more conducive to coming out of the apartments and enjoying your neighbor and less conducive to illegal activity.

2. Decrease the crime and the fear of crime within the complex. Implement a program to keep management personnel informed of activities occurring inside the complex and of the police responses to those problems.
3. Get beat officers actively involved in the problem solving process at this location by having them out on foot patrol or bike patrol.
4. Implement a crime stoppers program within the complex as well as a program to keep management informed of activities occurring inside the complex and of police activity in the complex.
5. Build a partnership between the apartment management, the residents, and the Plano Police Department.

Phase One: Police Visibility And Intensive Enforcement

From the analysis phase of the project, officers felt that a strong police presence needed to be established that was not exclusively "call driven." Officer Hernandez, Neighborhood Officers and beat officers performed countless hours of foot patrol in and around complex. This was extremely effective for several reasons. First of all, officers were able to catch violators in the act of offenses due to being on foot patrol or bike patrol because they were not observed just in a marked vehicle driving around and through location. Officers were able to blend in better and get a feel for the atmosphere while on foot/bike patrol. Most importantly, residents found that they felt more comfortable approaching and talking to officers in the complex. After a period of time, residents began to talk to officers or left voice messages with the officer regarding specific problems. The foot patrol and bike patrol also allowed officers the opportunity to more effectively investigate problems such as loud music, narcotics, alcohol violations, prostitution, and other reported offenses.

Officer Hernandez coordinated the response of other department divisions to attack the illegal activity occurring within the complex. On several occasions, Neighborhood Police Officers, the Narcotics Unit and beat officers attempted to perform drug interdiction operations in an effort to identify and target persons involved in drug usage and trafficking

within the complex. Officers also performed special detail enforcement targeting the single males or JOHNS at complex that led to the arrest of three individuals. The surveillance and foot patrol were successful in arrests for alcohol violations. Officers made numerous arrests of residents and visitors for outstanding warrants from other agencies and the City of Plano that added to the perception of a strong police presence. Officers identified numerous visitors to the complex that had extensive criminal history with no legitimate reason for being on property. The management and staff started to call the Plano Police Department to issue criminal trespass warnings to these individuals as well as any other visitor that they determined to be involved in illicit activity. The management staff also began to evict residents found to be involved in activity that was deemed to be illegal or in violation of the apartment policy. The management staff began to give out cash rewards for information of violations such as prostitution.

Phase Two: Nuisance Abatement

Officers Hernandez, Glenn, Kermes and Sgt. Rody compiled the necessary documents needed to file a Nuisance Abatement case against Alta Vista Apartments. Under Texas Civil Statutes, properties that are shown to have repeated offenses such as narcotics, alcohol violations, prostitution, and/or obscenity violations may be closed by court order for up to one year.

It was never the intention of the Plano Police Department to close the property. We were interested in change and how to improve the quality of life for residents. Officers first compiled the documentation necessary for a Nuisance Abatement case. This included documentation on all arrest/offense reports, every Field Interrogation Card, known/registered sex offenders, copies of active warrants and every bit of information we

could gather on active prostitutes and their pimps. We met with representatives from the Police Department, the Health Department, Property Standards, Building Inspections and the Fire Department. After an initial [unannounced] inspection of the property for Code violations, we sent correspondence to the owner requesting a meeting with him. Code Enforcement employees documented numerous violations that included boiler room repairs, plumbing, exterior wiring and electrical, smoke detector violations and water leaks. All of the data that had been compiled over the past several months [which supported a nuisance abatement case] was presented to the owner of the complex at a meeting held at City Hall. Approximately 12 city employees comprised the Nuisance Abatement Team and all were present when the owner arrived. The owner of Alta Vista was "taken back" at the amount of paperwork against his property and he felt somewhat isolated when up against a unified team of city employees. This was our goal and we wanted to make a lasting impression on him. Officers made it clear that our intention was to work in close partnership with him and his Management Team to eliminate problems within the complex so that any nuisance abatement action could be avoided. We also stressed the consequences of our case going to the Attorney Generals Office. The owner of Alta Vista was very receptive to our suggestions and agreed to do every thing he could to reduce calls for service and problems regarding prostitution within his complex.

Phase Three: Education

Officers attempted to combat the lack of communication that had been addressed by the management. Complex management complained that they were not given monthly statistics on calls for service and had not seen officers in the area. We found that they were being given a printout listing calls for service, however the reports were often delayed and

did not give specific information on apartments. For example, the printouts received just listed the overall address of the property without specific apartment numbers. Management would realize that "alcohol violations" occurred over the weekend but had no idea which resident was involved. We immediately went to Crime Analysis and had them arrange a format that listed call types and any apartment numbers associated with the original call. This allowed the Management Team a bimonthly accounting of what was going on with their residents and who was causing problems on the property.

Assessment

Officers continue to monitor the effectiveness of this project. Our Assessment of the Police Department's response clearly indicates significant improvements in the situation at Alta Vista Apartments.

- Per the Abatement Teams request, lighting was dramatically improved around the complex. The owner immediately invested over \$7,300 in lighting and the complex no longer appears dark or isolated at night.
- All code violations were repaired immediately [within 30-45 days] and extensive revitalization efforts inside individual apartments are underway. Over \$150,000 has been spent on revitalization efforts to ensure that residents have adequate housing.
- The complex is quieter and more consistent with a family oriented apartment complex.
- A decrease in criminal offenses was noted, specifically calls for prostitution.
- Residents are reporting incidents and suspicious activity to management and the Police Department.
- Management has started to enforce apartment policies and made numerous evictions after our initial meeting, with the owner.
- Officers have just started using the multi-housing response card system to keep management informed of police activity in the complex. Officer Hernandez is also responsible for making sure the management receives their call for service statistics bimonthly.
- Beat officers are very active in patrolling area, especially in the evening hours and deep night hours when activity is at its highest level.
- Patrol officers began to perform proactive patrol in the complex and communicated problems with management or the NPO Officer assigned to that area.

- The management is now giving out cash incentives to residents for reporting suspicious activity.
- A positive working relationship has been formed between management and Plano Police Officers. Open lines of communication have been established between the Management Team and the NPO Officer in the area.
- Management and the owner now patrol the property during the evening hours and report suspicious activity to the NPO Officer.
- Residents are starting to contact the Police Department on incidents or will give information to officers by voice mail.

Assessment Summary

We determined that our combined efforts with other city departments was successful in not only reducing criminal activity but also in improving the overall property. Exterior and interior improvements are clearly evident and a vast improvement in lighting deters those that benefit from criminal activity. A \$7,000 investment in lighting is significant for this property and clearly shows the owners willingness to assist the Abatement Team throughout this process.

Evictions were made quickly and the owner "passed the word" that criminal activity would not be tolerated. It was important to us for his Management Team stress to residents that they would be evicted from repeated police contacts. Initially, we were not concerned with this problem moving elsewhere. We wanted the problem to be reduced at this complex and we had to start somewhere. We are finding that prostitution is fast becoming a significant problem in our city and we will have to seek new and innovative ways to reduce this activity whenever possible.

We compared all calls for service between the months of January 2001- April 2001 to the same period of 2002. Calls for service have increased significantly due to the residents calling in to report activity and a proactive management team. Calls increased

from 19 in 2001 to 41 in 2002, however there has been a reduction in prostitution calls and arrests.

For Alta Vista Apartments, we will not be able to completely rid the complex of prostitution due to the transient nature of this apartment community. We have, however made a positive difference in the quality of life for residents and reduced prostitution activities in this complex.

Reference List

1. Property Closure Manual, 11th Edition 2001
Office of the Attorney General-State of Texas
Civil Enforcement Section
Special Crimes Division
2. Supervising the Problem Solving Process
A Guide for Supervision

Agency And Officer Information

The assigned Neighborhood Patrol Officer, Officer Joe Hernandez, initiated this Problem Solving Project. The Problem Oriented Police Officers of the Neighborhood Police Officer Unit, Patrol Division, Narcotics Unit, and employees from Property Standards, Building Inspections, Environmental Health Department and the Plano Fire Department assisted him.

All Plano Police Officers have received training in the mechanics of and philosophy of Problem Oriented and Community Policing. In 2001, an 8-hour block of instruction was

given to all employees and participants had to work through the SARA model regarding a specific problem. All officers assigned to the Neighborhood Police Officer Unit receive more extensive training in The Community Policing philosophy and Problem Oriented Policing.

Beyond Supervisory Commendations, no additional incentives were given to officers assigned to this project. Officers were allowed extremely flexible schedules with little or no direct supervision to assist in hitting hot spots during specific hours.

NPO Unit officers used a computer database to document daily activities associated with Alta Vista Apartments. Officers relied on their prior training and other special projects they had worked on to address the project at hand.

Substantial personnel resources were committed to Alta Vista Apartments project, at least initially. After the vast improvements were noted, additional personnel were eliminated except for the continuous monitoring of the complex. In any event, no resources beyond the Department's established budget were expended.

Contact Information

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city of piano

police department

Gregory W. Rushin
Chief of Police

909 14th Street
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Plano, Texas 75086-0358
972-424-5678

Alta Vista Apartments c/o
Mr. Randy Pardue
11110 Woodmeadow Pkwy, Suite A
Dallas, TX 75228

April 8, 2002

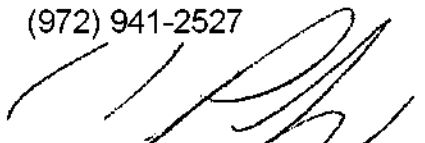
Dear Mr. Pardue,

I am pleased to inform you that the Plano Police Department and the Nuisance Abatement Team has concluded it's review of the Alta Vista Apartments at 700 18 Street. Provided that the problems previously identified do not re-occur, no further formal action is planned by the Nuisance Abatement Team.

Your response to this inquiry was very positive and you made substantial improvements to the property. Representatives from the Property Standards Unit report that you have remedied all noted deficiencies. Your management team, working with officers from the Police Department, made a substantial impact on reducing calls for service and crime at the Alta Vista Apartments. Your assistance in resolving these issues is greatly appreciated and we look forward to your continued cooperation. Should you require any assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely, 

Raymond S. Ready, Sergeant
Neighborhood Police Officer Unit
(972) 941-2527



%Joseph L. Parks, Lieutenant
Patrol Services Division

PROPERTY CLOSURE MANUAL

Eleventh Edition
2001



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, STATE OF TEXAS
CIVIL ENFORCEMENT SECTION

ALTA VISTA

700 18TH 6020

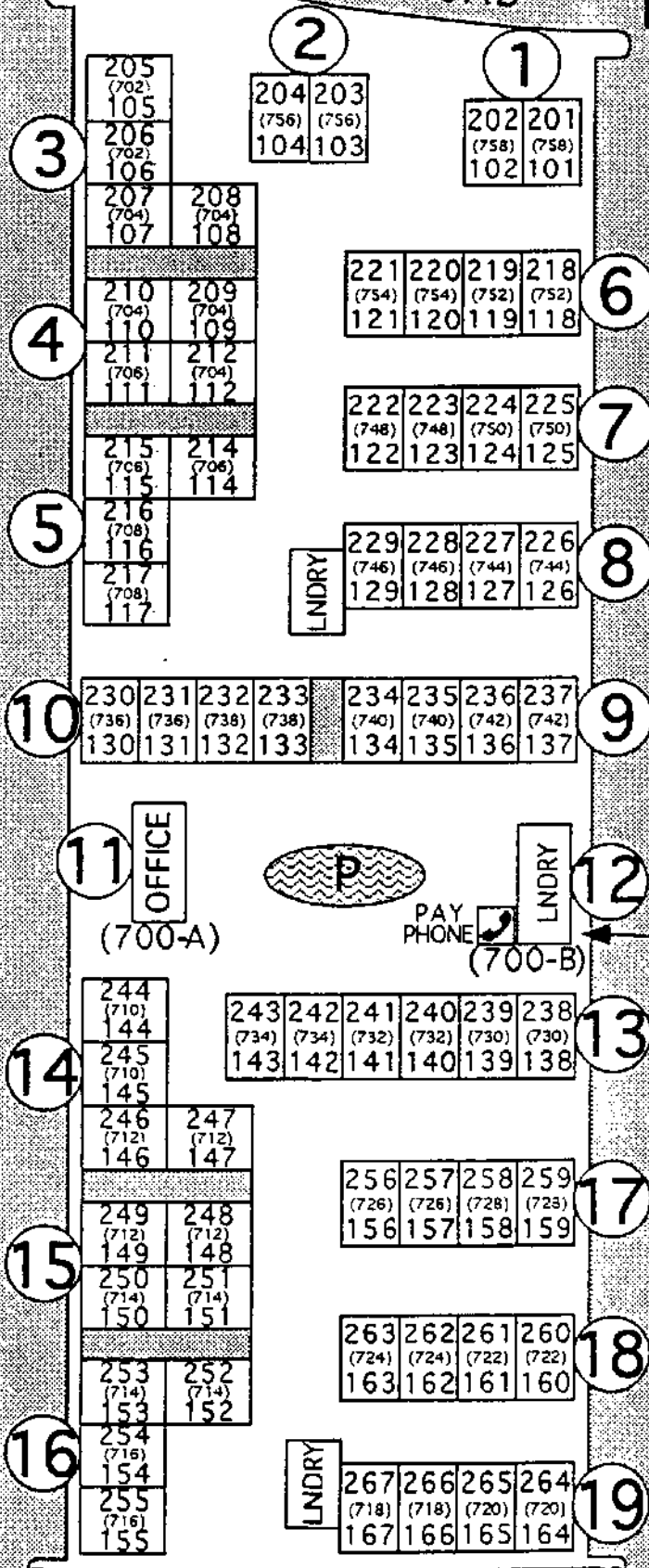
TO US 75 SERVICE ROAD
18 TH

NOTE
100#S
ARE DOWNSTAIRS
200#S
ARE UPSTAIRS
(700#S)
ARE STREET NUMBERS



CENTER SQUARE APTS

TO 16TH



NOTE
911 CALLS MAY COME FROM PAY PHONE FROM OCCUPANTS WITHOUT TELEPHONES

6020
(CWA 11/25/94)

Alta Vista Apartments Incident Reports January 2001 - April 2001

Calls For Service -19

Offense Reports

Arrests Reports

Assaults	0
BMV/Thefts/Burglaries	0
Criminal Mischief	0
Gambling	0
Miscellaneous	1
Narcotics	0
Prostitution	2
<u>UUMV</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	3

Alcohol Violations	0
Assaults	0
Prostitution	1
Traffic Violations	0
<u>Warrants</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	4

Alta Vista Apartments Incident Reports January 2002 - April 2002

Calls For Service - 41

Offense Reports

Arrests Reports

Assaults	1
BMV/Thefts/Burglaries	2
Criminal Mischief	0
Gambling	0
Miscellaneous	4
Narcotics	0
Prostitution	0
<u>UUMV</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	7

Alcohol Violations	2
Assaults	1
Prostitution	0
Traffic Violations	0
<u>Warrants</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	3

PLANO POLICE DEPARTMENT Multi-Family housing Response Card

PLANO POLICE DEPARTMENT MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING RESPONSE

Officers of the Plano Police Department responded to a call for service at this property. If you require additional information, please call the Records Division at 972-941-2149.

CALL TYPE

DATE _____ TIME _____ am 1 pm

FILE NUMBER _____ APARTMENT #

ARREST MADE: YES NO CITATION ISSUED: YES NO

OFFICER NAME BADGE

FM532-36 REV 4102

