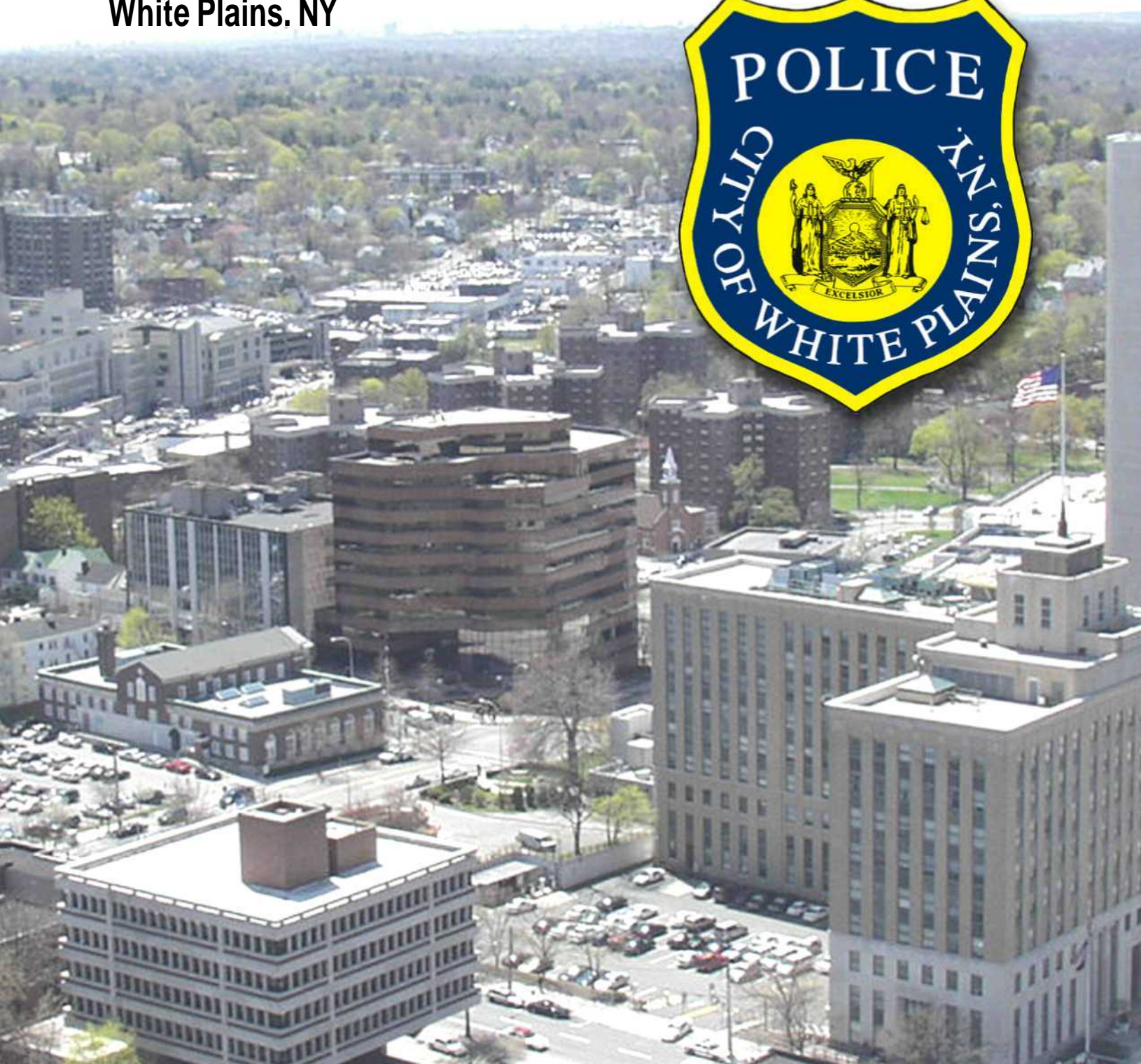


CRIME REDUCTION THROUGH SAFE HOUSING



White Plains, NY



SAFE HOUSING TASK FORCE



**CRIME REDUCTION
THROUGH
COORDINATED EFFORT**



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
77 SOUTH LEXINGTON AVENUE • WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK 10601
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IACP Police Investigative Operations Committee
Attn: Mr. Phil Lynn

The City of White Plains Department of Public Safety (Police and Fire Bureaus) is entrusted with providing a safe and secure environment for all its residents as well as the reduction of crime, violations and conditions that detract from the quality of life relative to safe housing.

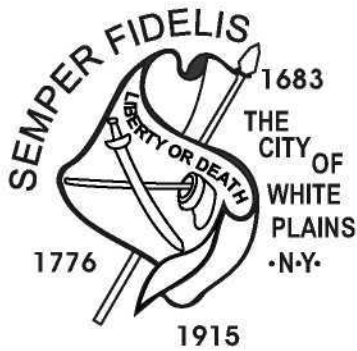
Over the last few years, the City of White Plains has experienced unprecedented economic growth and revitalization. During this time, foreign born residents with diverse backgrounds began looking for safe and affordable housing within the city. Some of these people began to take up residence in structures that were not designed to safely house the number of people living within. This has created public safety concerns that had to be addressed.

In the latter part of 2003, the Department of Public Safety instituted the "Safe Housing Task Force". The purpose was to combat crime and ensure safe housing for all city residents. The Police Bureau spearheaded this program and worked with various agencies to reduce crime and improve housing. Since the inception of this task force, over 50 criminal and civil cases have been brought against various defendants. These cases comprised of more than 500 offenses which included various crimes, ordinances, and city codes that had been violated. Two of the major cases which were handled by the task force are highlighted in this application.

This task force has been responsible for a reduction of crime, as well as the improvement of quality of life for many residents, by working in close cooperation with Tenant Groups, Community Groups, Neighborhood Associations and Landlords. Living conditions have improved and the city has been able to promote, provide and preserve safe and decent living standards for many residents. Overall crime dropped 15% in 2004.

The Department of Public Safety is committed to creating and maintaining a safe environment for all residents in White Plains and continues to be united in the common purpose of making its city a safer place for working families, seniors and young people alike.

Frank G. Straub, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Public Safety



Crime Reduction Through Safe Housing



SAFE HOUSING TASK FORCE

Committed To The Reduction Of Crime
And Improved Quality Of Life

INCEPTION OF PROGRAM

In the latter part of 2003, the Department of Public Safety instituted the Safe Housing Task Force to combat crime and unsafe housing issues. The task force is a multi agency response unit to investigate and address the violations listed below:

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

Criminal Conduct

- Weapons Offenses
- Drug Offenses
- Criminal Nuisance
- Rent Gouging
- Public Health Issues
- Domestic Violence Issues
- Endangerment of Children
- Youth Gangs

Fire Code Violations

Building Code Violations

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| • POLICE BUREAU | • FIRE BUREAU |
| • BUILDING DEPARTMENT | • LAW DEPARTMENT |
| • HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE | • ASSESSOR'S OFFICE |
| • COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT | • COMMUNITY GROUPS |



WHITE PLAINS POLICE DEPARTMENT

77 South Lexington Avenue • White Plains, N.Y. 10601
General: (914) 422-6111 • Administration: (914) 422-6253



Safe Housing Task Force Case 1

From the latter part of 2003 until September 2004, a nine story housing complex located at 225 Martin Luther King Boulevard (where 88 families comprising of approximately 400 people reside) became the target of an arsonist for several months. There were 56 fire alarms; 41 of them were intentional set fires and the remaining 15 were false alarms. Some of the accelerants used were flammable liquids placed under resident's doors (trapping one victim inside). The fires were continually set in hallways and compactor chutes on the upper floors. These fires endangered the lives and property of residents in this public housing building, as well as the emergency services personnel that had to respond to suppress the fires.

During these above incidents, residents became frightened and public safety issues became of paramount importance to the City of White Plains and its task force...

The Safe Housing Task Force composed of the Police and Fire Bureaus working in conjunction with the Building Department, White Plains Housing Authority, Westchester County Crime Laboratory, and the Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms unit began an investigation that lasted for several months trying to deter these incidents and arrest the person(s) responsible for these crimes.

Hundreds of residents, witnesses and workers were interviewed and backgrounds were conducted. Suspects were developed and accurate files were maintained by investigators.

In August 2004, a resident of the above building was interviewed for making a bomb threat on a local bank (using a note left on the door of the bank). The Detectives working the case noticed that she also lived on the 8th floor of the building in question. During initial interviews, she denied any involvement with the arsons occurring the building or the bomb threat.

Shortly thereafter, Detectives subpoenaed all handwritten documents that the Housing Authority had on file relative to her residency requirements. These handwritten documents were sent for analysis to Alcohol Firearms and Tobacco Bureau where the handwriting was analyzed and found to be a match to the note left at the bank.

With this information, the woman was reinterviewed. She confessed to the bomb threat on the local bank as well as the arsons that occurred in her building. The fire alarms ceased, residents finally felt at ease, and she was convicted and received several years in state prison for the crimes.

The work of the task force, in conjunction with all other city, county, and federal agencies proved to be very significant in the successful conclusion of this case. In addition, it has established a tenant/taskforce cooperative bond that continues to effectively provide intelligence on all criminal matters, thereby significantly increasing the quality of life well after the case conclusion.



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Safe Housing Task Force Case 2

During the inception of the Safe Housing Task Force, a multi family dwelling became the target of a lengthy investigation for narcotics trafficking and illegal firearms. This occupied dwelling was directly across the street from a secondary school for troubled children. The White Plains Police Departments Narcotics unit began a lengthy investigation with the assistance of the Task Force as well as the Westchester County D E A Task force and the NYS Organized Crime Task Force.

After several months, controlled buys were made from the residents within and a search warrant was obtained .The search was conducted for illegal narcotics and loaded weapons. The house was also found to be an illegal "rooming house "for foreign born residents (charging exorbitant rents) .The search warrant and investigation concluded in the arrests of three members of a Dominican family and the seizure of drugs, cash, and illegal weapons. These subjects were charged federally in 2004 through the FBI s Violent Crime Task Force and the US Attorneys Office.

The three subjects plead guilty and were convicted of illegal weapons possession, narcotics trafficking and possession of stolen property. They face years of imprisonment and two of the subjects were eventually deported. The house that they once owned is presently undergoing asset forfeiture proceedings.

This investigation removed dangerous criminals from the streets as well as drugs and weapons from the community. It also made the area surrounding the school safer and removed dangerous living standards that existed within the house.

Publicity from this investigation quickly made its way into the Hispanic community. The Safe Housing Task Force began to work closely with community leaders and residents to identify other landlords and locations that preyed on foreign born seasonal residents, charging them exorbitant rents while denying them adequate, humane and safe housing conditions.

Ethnic gangs that routinely gathered at these rooming houses, taking advantage of the residents and feeling empowered to commit criminal acts and disorderly conduct, left, because of the Task Force attention.

Through this investigation, the Safe Housing Task Force established trust in the minority Hispanic community. This led to many other investigations of unsafe housing conditions, rent gouging, criminal nuisance and gang activity that continue today.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND INITIATIVES

The Safe Housing Task Force meets once a month to share information and ideas as well as to discuss actions taken by their departments. Relentless follow-up is mandated and documented.

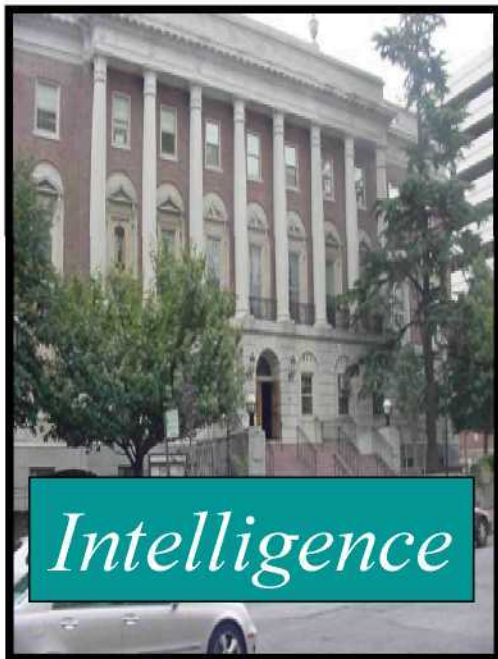
Police and Fire units in White Plains responded to approximately 55,000 calls for service in 2004. They have been trained to ascertain indicators of criminal behavior and unsafe housing. If any type of crime or violation is observed, Public Safety members will remain in the residence and contact the appropriate agencies who then respond immediately. Appropriate action is undertaken immediately to correct any illegal activity.

Arrests, Summonses or Directives are completed on all violations observed. Proper documentation and court presentations are personally handled by the appropriate divisions.

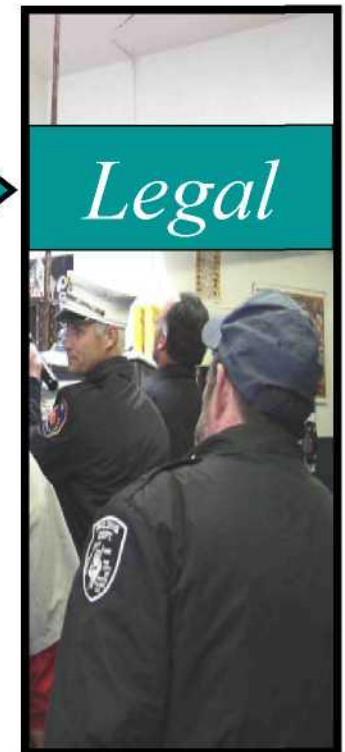
Task Force Goals

- CRIME REDUCTION
- SAFE HOUSING
- NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION
- PUBLIC EDUCATION

A Multi-Agency Approach



Education



Enforcement





- Reduction Of Crime
- Multi Agency Approach To Making The City Of White Plains A Safer Place To Live
- Improved Housing Conditions
- Improved Neighborhoods
- Community Outreach

Enforcement

- Arrests / Summonses Issued
- Proper Documentation And Follow Up
- Case Overview By The Safe Housing Task Force
- Diligent Follow Up



 **SAFE HOUSING**



**Multi-Agency Task Force
w/ support of
Community Organizations**

**MAYOR JOSEPH M. DELFINO
SAFE HOUSING PRESS CONFERENCE - FEBRUARY 2005**

City targets illegal housing

White Plains panel part of public safety improvement plan

Richard Liebson
The Journal News

WHITE PLAINS — With 1,700 new housing units under construction in White Plains and a growing population of low-paid immigrant workers, the city is refocusing its attention on the problem of illegal housing with the appointment of a Safe Housing Task Force to ensure that landlords comply with building, fire and safety codes.

The city's retail and residential building boom is attracting "many low-income families," Mayor Joseph Delfino said in announcing the task force, composed of representatives from the Police, Fire and Building departments.

"Many of those families try to share costs, and that leads to housing conditions that can endanger lives," the mayor said. "This task force is designed to protect renters and their families."

With stated goals of increasing coordination and communication among city agencies, improving public awareness of tenant rights and improving code compliance through education, the task force aims to bring better organization to what has been a piecemeal approach to code enforcement.

"This is Phase II of our overall comprehensive public safety plan," said Deputy Public Safety Commissioner David Chong. "Phase I was traffic and speed enforcement, and Phase III, which we expect to announce toward the end of the year, will be on emergency services and fire rescue."

The housing task force will maintain a database of code violations and compile files on repeat violators and landlords. All city police officers are being trained to identify fire and building code violations, and to notify the appropriate agency. The city is also mailing notices to landlords, reminding them of their responsibilities, and distributing brochures in English and Spanish asking people to report suspected violations. The brochure features a checklist of dangerous conditions that should be reported.

Delfino promised "relentless follow up," by all three agencies once a violation has been identified. He said the city will also help families find alternate housing if a building is closed for violations.

While similar to code enforcement programs introduced during the mayoral administrations of Alfred Del Vecchio and Sy Schulman, City Building Commissioner Michael Gismondi said the latest effort will involve more sharing of information and a faster response.

"When a violation was found before, we'd get a report and respond the next day. With the advent of cell phones and the emphasis on sharing information and coordinating our efforts, if the police find a problem, we will respond immediately."

Gismondi said he expected the task force "will bring a few hundred new cases to court each year."

City Councilman Glen Hockley who said he had been studying the problem of illegal housing for about a year, called the new task force "a great plan, but I feel it missing one component. I feel it would be much better if we involved the city Human Rights Commission. You need to have watchdog so that immigrants who have been taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords feel that they're not being pushed around or punished."

Hockley said he and Councilman Thomas Roach were drafting legislation to double the fines for code violations, "to put teeth into our building laws."

Delfino said he'd consider including the Human Rights Commission on the task force.

"We know there will be some adjustments as we go along, and we will consider it. But this is basically an enforcement task force, so I'm not sure specifically what the commission's role would be."

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