

# **Problem-Oriented Policing Project**

**Location: Sherwood Forest Apartments  
1521 Sherwood Forest  
Houston, Texas**

# Summary

## **Scanning**

While conducting follow-up burglary investigations in the Northwest quadrant of the City of Houston, it was discovered that in master district four, specifically 4F10 beat, there was an increase in burglaries at the Sherwood Forest Apartments located at 1521 Sherwood Forest.

## **Analysis**

Data was collected to determine the extent of the problem. The manager of the apartment complex was provided information regarding current security practices. The Burglary and Theft Division also consulted the Community Service officers working in the area in an effort to gather data.

## **Response:**

As a result of the analysis of the problem, it was determined that apartment management, citizens/tenants, private security and the local Houston Police Department should share specific roles in it's solution. Specifically, apartment owner/management should be more accountable for their security.

## **Roles of participants for solutions to the problem:**

### **Citizens (Management)**

- Raise standards for tenant occupancy.
- Make all outside lighting functional.
- Keep entrance gate closed / require security code.
- Send out fliers to tenants advising them to report any suspicious activity.
- Secure trespass affidavits.

## **Private Security**

- Provide security seven days a week between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm.

## **Police (HPD)**

- Community service officer setup safety meeting / crime prevention techniques.
- Assist with trespass affidavits.
- Respond to alert slips / more police presence.
- Crime analysis provide data to monitor progress.
- Hold monthly meeting with role participants.

## **Assessment**

Specific roles of the local police were implemented and as a result of the initiatives, apartment burglaries decreased from (7) seven between February 2005 and May 2005 to (3) three between May 2005 and July 2005 to (2) two between July 2005 and August 2005. Although a sixty six percent (66 %) reduction of the problem was realized, the ultimate impact could have been more successful. It was learned that the local police, apartment management, private security as well as residents must be committed and share responsibility for a long-term gain.

**SCANNING**

While conducting follow-up burglary investigations in the Northwest quadrant of the City of Houston, it was discovered that in master district four, specifically 4F10 beat, there was an increase in burglaries at the Sherwood Forest Apartments located at 1521 Sherwood Forest. This location normally has very few reported incidents of burglaries; however, between February 2005 and May 2005 there were seven reported such incidents. The incidents were occurring between 8:00 am and 3:00 pm weekdays with suspect gaining entrance by kicking in the front door or an adjacent window pilfering cash, jewelry, and electronic equipment.

## **ANALYSIS**

On June 6, 2005, a meeting was held with Ms. Norma Rodriguez (apartment manager). It was revealed that the apartment complex is 33 years old, having being built in 1972. The complex consists of 212 units and is fenced with a gated entrance. The buildings are bricked and in fairly good condition with predominantly Hispanic tenants. Ms. Rodriguez related that she was aware of this sudden rise in the incidents of burglaries in the complex. Ms. Rodriguez stated that the owners of the complex lowered the standard for the tenant occupancy from seven years conviction to three years during the last few months, and since that time overall crime has gone up. She indicated that a meeting would be held with their on-site private security (Spartan Security) to discuss the problem.

Efforts were made to interview private security officers (Spartan Security), however no response was returned. Ms. Rodriguez indicated that management was in the process of securing another private security company. Ms. Rodriguez stated that security would be provided seven days a week from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Ms. Rodriguez stated that the entrance gate is normally left open between business hours, however she would now keep this gate closed and require security codes to be used for all entrances. Ms. Rodriguez stated that she would make sure all outside lighting would be made functional.

A meeting was held with Lieutenant S. Phares of the Northwest Division Community Service Unit. Lieutenant Phares was apprised of the apartment burglary problem and indicated that he would assist in any way. Lieutenant Phares assigned Officer Robert Smith to contact Ms. Rodriguez to offer his assistance. Officer Smith advised Ms. Rodriguez of crime prevention techniques. Trespass affidavits were also put on file authorizing the Houston Police Department to enter the premises at said location and to enforce all applicable trespass laws on behalf and in regard to the referenced property. A letter was generated and sent out to each tenant advising them to report any suspicious activity to police security. (Ms. Rodriguez had indicated that some tenants spoke only Spanish and may be reluctant to speak to the police).

Officers assigned to the area were apprised of the burglary problem. Alert slips were put on file in the patrol division which alerted beat officers in the area to periodically check the location for suspicious activity. Ms. Rodriguez had indicated that she would like to see more HPD presence in the area.

The ultimate goal is to attack a specific crime, namely apartment burglaries, located at 1521 Sherwood Forest (Sherwood Forest Apartments), using citizens, private security and police personnel. Specifically, through the efforts outlined, it is hoped better methods of dealing with the problem are developed and a substantial reduction of the problem is obtained.

During the next few months crime analysis unit will provide data on the number of burglaries reported at the location. Monthly meetings will be held with apartment managers, private security officers, as well as HPD personnel to monitor progress. It is hoped that apartment managers and tenants would be receptive to an Apartment Watch Program.

## **RESPONSE**

As a result of the analysis of the problem, it was determined that apartment management, citizens/tenants, private security and the local Houston Police Department should share specific

roles in it's solution. Specifically, apartment owner/management should be more accountable for their security.

**SEE APPENDIX** — Taken from recent Houston Chronicle Edition

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## **ASSESSMENT**

Crime analysis unit provided data for apartment burglaries located at 1521 Sherwood Forest (Sherwood Forest Apts.). Between May 2005 and July 8, 2005, there were three reported burglaries. As previously indicated, between February 2005 and May 2005, there were seven such reported incidents. Incident # 81493305, was investigated by HPD Northwest Tact Officers

who were able to arrest and charge an adult suspect; a juvenile suspect was also named. For incident # 88537605, HPD officers questioned and released two suspects after giving them trespass warnings. Incident # 9753005, involved a husband and wife, civil matter, where the husband came into the apartment and took household articles.

It should be noted that four suspects were arrested and charged during an arson investigation under arson case # 050743. These suspects were charged with burglary of the apartment complex located at 1701 Upland which is adjacent to the Sherwood Forest Apartment complex. It is believed, these suspects along with a juvenile suspect may be involved in burglaries at the Sherwood Forest Apartment complex.

A meeting was scheduled for July 20, 2005, with apartment managers, private security officers, and HPD Officer Smith to discuss progress of stated solutions to the problem. The meeting was later called off for lack of interest on the part of the citizens.

Crime analysis unit provided data for the apartment burglaries located at 1521 Sherwood Forest (Sherwood Forest Apts.). Between July 2005 and August 15, 2005, there were two reported burglaries. As previously indicated, between February 2005 and May 2005, there were seven such reported incidents, and between May 2005 and July 8, 2005, there were three incidents. In the previous incidents, officers were able to arrest and charge suspects. HPD officers also questioned and released two suspects after giving them trespass warnings.

Another incident involved a husband and wife, civil matter, where the husband came into the apartment and took household articles. In the latter two incidents, one has no leads and the other was assigned to Officer Sanchez and his investigation is on going.

Ms. Rodriguez (Assistant Manager) was contacted and she advised that the apartment management were in a shake-up. The manager is no longer on staff. It was also learned that certain functions outlined as roles for management and private security had not been met. Specifically, standards for tenant occupancy had not been raised, no upgrades had been made on the entrance gate and, more importantly, private security was nonexistent. Ms. Rodriguez

indicated that she would continue to work on the problems. Another meeting is scheduled for sometime in the future and the problem would be monitored on a continuous basis.

Specific roles of the local police were implemented and as a result of the initiatives, apartment burglaries decreased from (7) seven between February 2005 and May 2005 to (3) three between May 2005 and July 2005 to (2) two between July 2005 and August 2005. Although a sixty six percent (66 %) reduction of the problem was realized, the ultimate impact could have been more successful. It was learned that the local police, apartment management, private security as well as residents must be committed and share responsibility for a long-term gain.



## AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

This problem initiative was implemented using Houston Police Department personnel. Specifically; Northwest Crime Analysis Unit, Northwest Divisional Community Service Unit, Northwest Divisional Tactical Unit and North Patrol Division. The officers performed their duties as a normal course of business with no added incentives or additional funds.

B. G. Conway

Lieutenant

Houston Police Department

1200 Travis

Houston, Texas 77002

713-308-0900

Fax 713-308-0912

Email: [Bennie.Conway@cityofhouston.net](mailto:Bennie.Conway@cityofhouston.net)