

**77th STREET AREA
LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**2006 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE
IN PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING**

NARCOTIC LOCATION ABATEMENT LETTER PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Los Angeles City Attorney's Office created a unit, Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program (CNAP) to handle nuisance abatements from such activity as narcotics, gang and prostitution activity. A City Ordinance, Municipal Code Section 47.50, was established making it a crime for owners of property within the City to allow such activity to occur. The ordinance further mandated the eviction of all parties participating in such activity. Although the ordinance required only one arrest resulting from the above activity, City Attorney guidelines required three separate arrests to be made before a Deputy City Attorney could open a location for abatement consideration. With such a mandate in place, narcotic locations would stay open for weeks, even months before an abatement action would be considered. This lack of action not only weighed heavily on law enforcement resources, but also allowed the activity to remain in the community, making neighborhoods unsafe. Frustrated with the lack of qualified abatement locations within the boundaries of the 77th Street Area, Sergeant I Michael Flanagan began a program to contact the property owner whenever a narcotics arrest was made on their property. This program began with a simple letter being mailed to the owner and has expanded to actual meetings with the owner, inspections of their property and assistance in making the property crime free. The property owners were then placed in contact with a Rental Association where owners can network with other property owners. To date, 76 properties have been cleaned and cleared of criminal elements with no repeated incidents.

Description

Scanning

As the Officer In Charge (OIC) of the 77th Street Area Senior Lead Officer (SLO) Unit, Sergeant Flanagan received numerous complaints from community residents regarding narcotic locations (crack houses) remaining open even though a search warrant had been recently served and several people had been arrested and taken to jail. Several questions were raised. *Why were these locations still in operation? Who was running these locations? Why did the owner of the property allow his/her property to be used for illegal activity?* It was determined that the locations remained open because of supply and demand. The fear of being arrested did not outweigh the amount of currency being made at the locations. Most of the suspects running these locations were the original suspects arrested, who were out on bail or bond. The suspects knew that due to the over crowding situation in the jails and prisons, they were only going to serve 6% of their sentence. The suspects did not fear obtaining another case. Most of the locations were rentals where the owners were off-site (absentee owners). To rid the locations of the criminal element would require a civil abatement proceeding.

Even though a City Municipal Code Ordinance existed that required only one arrest to be made at the location, City Attorney guidelines required three arrests to be made at a location, within two years, before the location would be considered for abatement. Based on the availability of narcotics officers, this could mean a wait of weeks even months before enough arrests could be made to refer the location to CNAP for abatement consideration. Frustrated with the lack of abatements, Sergeant Flanagan began addressing the issue through the 77th Street Area SLO Unit.

Analysis

A review of Municipal Code Section 47.50 was conducted. A review of narcotic arrest reports was conducted for the period between 2004 –2006. Locations were chosen based on the arrest report designating a specific location related to a property address. Seventy-six locations were chosen. The arrest locations were then queried in the Consolidated Crime Analysis Database (CCAD) for multiple arrests. Owner information was then obtained through both the City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety database, and the Los Angeles County Assessors Office database.

Response

Once a location was chosen a file was created. A strongly worded letter was sent out to the owner of the property explaining that a narcotics arrest was made at the location, or a search warrant and arrest was made at the location for a narcotics violation. This letter was sent to the property location and the owner's residential address. This included locations where the owner of the property or a family member was arrested. The letter contained language, which expressed that if Sergeant Flanagan was not contacted within one month, the matter would be referred to the City Attorney's Office for possible abatement proceedings. It should be noted that all property owners made contact upon receiving this letter.

Once contact was made, a meeting was set up at the police station. Present at this meeting was the property owner, the Area SLO and Sergeant Flanagan. If the owner wished to bring a representative along with him it was allowed. During the initial meeting the arrest incident was reviewed. Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 47.50 was also reviewed and explained. Goals were then established in relation to the eviction of parties involved and the future management of their property, when the owner of the property or an immediate family member was arrested. The goals pertained to keeping the property narcotics and crime-free. A date for an on-site inspection of the property would then be made. A signed Trespass Authorization was also obtained for future enforcement actions. During inspections, environmental issues such as lighting, shrubbery and safety would be discussed. Locations for "No Trespassing" signs were identified. Recommendations would be made and the property owner would be directed to the proper entity to obtain the items necessary for these recommendations. The owner of the property would then be referred to the Greater Los Angeles Rental Association where he/she could network with other income property owners. This association keeps a database available to members with previously evicted tenant information.

This ensures that the owner will not rent to an undesirable tenant. The owner is also invited to bi-annual apartment owner training sessions hosted by the 77th Street Area Neighborhood Prosecutor.

Upon satisfactory evidence that all reasonable efforts were made by the owner of the property to rid his/her property of the criminal element, the file was placed in a locked file drawer for a period of two-years.

Assessment

Since the inception of this program, 76 properties have been cleaned-up and declared crime-free. There has not been any incidence of repeated locations. Neighbors and community members have reported no further activity at the locations and a sense of safety in their neighborhoods.

Agency and Officer Information

The program is exclusive to the 77th Street Area and is not Department-wide.

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