

Crime Free Overview

Rental properties present a unique challenge for law enforcement. The typical neighborhood Watch approach to residents in single family homes is not easily adapted to rental communities. In single family homes, owners generally have a large cash investment in the purchase of their home. This motivates owners to a greater concern about crime in their neighborhoods. With rising crime rates come lowering property values.

An owner of a single family home might also be looking at a long term of residency. Typically, homeowners have a thirty-year mortgage for their property. Home is where they come each day and perhaps, to raise a family. There tends to be a lot of pride and ownership of their property. When crime problems begin to appear, owners are very likely to organize neighborhood Watch activities to protect the long-term interests of their families.

In rental properties, the communities tend to be much more transient. Most often, residents sign a six-month, nine-month, or a twelve-month lease for a rental property. In many cases, owners don't even require leases, and residency is based on a month-to-month agreement. This allows for an occupant to move very easily if they feel crime has reached a level they will not tolerate. It is easier to move away from crime than to confront it.

The police have historically fought a losing battle with neighborhood Watch in multi-family rental properties. In January of 1992, the Mesa Police Department was faced with a difficult decision. To no longer offer Block Watch training in rental properties, or to develop a new concept for crime prevention in the rental communities.

The result was the **CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM**. This bold, new program had no precedent. The program's concept was to take a multi-faceted approach to crime prevention. A unique coalition of police, property managers and residents of rental properties, the program was to be an on-going program with a three-phase approach to address all of the opportunities of crime in rental property.

The program was designed to include a certification process, never before offered by a police department. The incentives of police issued signs, certificates, and advertising privileges provided immediate interest in the program.

The development of the **Crime Free Lease Addendum** proved to be the backbone of the **CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM**. This addendum to the lease agreement lists specific criminal acts that, if committed on the property, will result in the immediate termination of the resident's lease.

The **CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM** achieved almost instant success. In rental properties with the highest crime rates, the immediate results showed up to a 90% reduction in police calls for service. Even in the best properties reductions of 15% to 20% were not uncommon.

The **CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM** began to spread nationally after the first year, and internationally after the second year. The **CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM** has been a success all across the United States and Canada.

Summary

The CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM is successful because it approaches crime on many fronts. The police cannot solve crime problems alone. Neither can the management or residents of rental properties. But by working together, the end result has been the most successful approach to crimes in rental communities.

There are three (3) ways criminal activity comes into a rental community. The criminal lives there, they visit friends there, or they randomly come to the property to commit crimes. The CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM addresses all three of these possibilities. By not renting to people with criminal intent, they not only reduce the likelihood of crime in the community, they also reduce the number of visitors who come to the property with criminal intent, i.e., to purchase drugs.

For the opportunistic criminal, the use of C.P.T.E.D. (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) has been used to combat crimes that might occur in the parking lots or common areas. This includes assaults, robberies, drive-by shootings, and auto thefts.

If the police, property managers and residents will make a dedicated effort to crime prevention and the CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM, the outlook for success is extremely high. Good luck as you endeavor to make your community a safer place to live and enjoy for many years to come.

Respectfully yours,

MIDWEST CITY POLICE DEPT
Crime Free Programs

