

Chapter 6

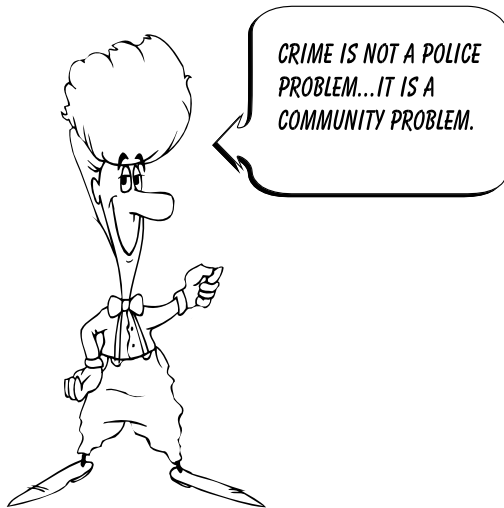
COMMUNITIES, NOT COMPLEXES!

NOT A COMPLEX

Rental properties are not complexes. **Complexes are disorders!** Rental properties are small communities where people live, and many raise a family. It is important to view each property as a community within a community. Residents need to feel they are a vital part of a healthy community. When residents feel at home, they are more apt to take pride and ownership of the area.

If residents of a rental property are fearful or not familiar with others in that community, many problems can result. Residents will be less likely to report suspicious or illegal activity, and that causes apathy. When apathy pervades, soon drug dealers and other undesirables will begin to take over the area. The only thing necessary for these activities to flourish is for good residents to do nothing to stop it. It doesn't take long for those who perpetrate illegal activity to realize no one is going to report them.

NOT A POLICE PROBLEM



Crime is NOT a police problem. It is a COMMUNITY problem. The police ARE a part of the community, so this does not exclude the police. It certainly is the police department's role to arrest people involved in illegal activity, but if the management re-rents to others committing criminal acts, the problem does not go away.

For example, if neighbors complain that various types of illegal activity are making a park unsafe for children to play in, this is not necessarily a police problem. The police can remove the persons committing crimes in the park, but if the residents don't follow-up by using the park for legitimate uses, other illegal activities will soon begin again.

PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Identify

- Actual and perceived problems
- Who is at risk
- How reliable is the data

2. Identify – Impact

- Police reports
- Calls for service
- Eviction rate
- Occupancy rate
- Damage/repair costs
- Non-renewals
- Residential complaints
- Security reports

3. Identify – Reasons

- Tolerance of crime
- Lack of police involvement
- Lack of education
- Poor communication
- Poor management skills/policies
- Resident apathy

4. Identify – Resources

- Police
- Residents
- Management
- Neighbors

5. Identify – Support Groups

- Police/Fire Personnel
- City government
- Resident councils
- Landscaping crews
- Upper management
- Office management
- Maintenance staff

6. Identify - Solutions

- Many solutions should be considered and implemented
- Don't resolve only one side of the issues
- Don't use "band aids" on serious problems
- Analyze success
- Try new approaches when necessary

HOW TO BEGIN

Start with residents that care about their environment. If you promote a strong sense of community concern, residents will not tolerate illegal activity, and are even willing to testify in court about abhorrent behavior among other residents. Remember that criminals are like predators, seeking the easy target. If they are able to scare residents into silence, they can perpetrate the crimes.

As previously stated, one of the most violent elements in society today is apathy. Ignoring a crime problem will allow it to flourish more rapidly. It works the same way as weeds. Ignoring a problem will not make it go away. Usually it will get worse.

FORM VS. FUNCTION

While a small sports car may be very attractive, it does not offer much protection in an accident. The 1955 sedan that weighs twice as much (or more) will offer better protection. The point is, **it doesn't matter how pretty something is. If it isn't safe, it isn't practical.**



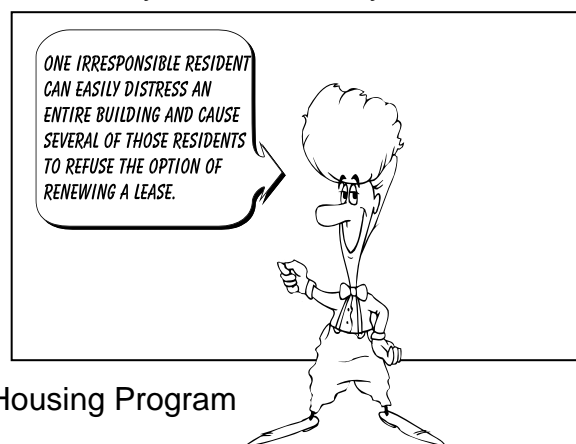
Property management may spend tens of thousands of dollars to beautify a property, but might not invest in security lighting. A person looking for a safe place to live may shy away from a property that is too dark, but a drug criminal may choose a property for that very reason.



The key to having a nice apartment community begins with attracting the right residents. If your property is clean and attractive, you are more likely to attract residents who will keep their rental units clean as well. Trimming trees and bushes doesn't have to be expensive. Responsible applicants will come if they feel responsible management is running the property

It is difficult to attract good residents if you have current residents loitering in the parking lots or common areas drinking alcohol or using drugs. People who conduct this kind of behavior will not only prevent good residents from moving in, they will influence your best residents not to renew their lease.

It is a good idea to visit the property at all times of the day and night to see how the residents behave. This is especially important for properties with off-site management or absentee landlords. Don't rely on independent management companies that contract their services. Many times they are chiefly concerned only with collecting the rent.



THE NEXT STEP

Once you have attracted the right applicants, be sure to sell them on the benefits of your particular property. It is a great idea to highlight the best features of the property. But **keep in mind, many properties have great amenities**. You need to appeal to their concerns about safety and security.

While no property manager can guarantee a resident will not be affected by crime, a resident will take great comfort in knowing the property has established a good rapport with the local police. Good prospects will be happy to hear management is a member of the CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM. **Prospects with a history of drug or other illegal activity may simply say, "Thank you, there is one other place I want to look at first."**

Be fair, but be firm in your residency requirements. It's your right. One property manager notorious for her strict guidelines was reported to the Arizona attorney general's office for possible discrimination. People from various classes were sent to the property to audit the manager. The report concluded the manager was equally rude to everyone; there was no discrimination, she was just very strict.

Once a resident shows interest in the property, let them know that all residents at the property have been required to sign the Crime Free Lease Addendum and pass a criminal background check. While this is no guarantee, it does show that management is doing everything they can legally do to reduce the likelihood of criminal activity on the property.

CLOSING THE DEAL

Once an applicant has been approved for residency, they will come into the office to review community rules and sign the rental agreements. This is a good time to explain management and resident responsibilities. Managers may choose to supply a "move-in" packet containing a copy of the signed lease and all other signed documents including the community rules.

Make sure to explain everything clearly and insure understanding. If the resident understands what a "violation" is and what can / can't be done by the resident **AND** management, dispute resolution will be simplified (should one occur). This is a great way to establish a professional, yet personal, rapport with the new residents.

Note: Be sure to give the residents a photocopy of their signed, Crime Free Lease Addendum.

KEEP IT GOING

The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program requires community activities at least annually for fully certified properties. Try to plan various activities that are sure to draw as many residents as possible. Food, drinks, door prizes and music are sure to draw large turnouts.

*INCLUDE THE ADULTS,
CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS
IN YOUR COMMUNITY
EVENTS!*



When residents feel they are a part of a community, they are more likely to work out differences with neighbors. Residents who don't associate with neighbors are much more likely to make complaints to management. People who use rental properties to promote illegal activity prefer to live in properties where residents keep to themselves, and community activities are less frequent.

To attract residents it may be necessary to invite a band, disc jockey, or sponsor a night of karaoke. This is likely to draw a lot of residents, especially if you have free food, drinks and giveaways to raffle off. By having functions that include all ages, residents begin to put names with faces, and faces with unit numbers. Residents will be less likely to cause problems in an area where they are well known.