

**ABSTRACT: 4750 CALLE LAS POSITAS/**

***Submitted by Officer Chris Carnahan of Oceanside Police Department***

My partner and I are members of the Oceanside Police Department N.E.T.Work Team. The N.E.T.Work Team does not handle radio calls as in patrol, but are tasked with targeting and solving on-going crime problems within a specific area of assignment. While working within the N.E.T.Work unit, we identified an on-going problem with one of the City of Oceanside's largest apartment complexes located at 4750 Calle Las Positas. This apartment complex consists of 168 units and houses approximately 700 people.

For the last four and one half years, the apartment complex was infested with gangs and narcotics. Illegal stores were operating out of several apartments and tenants were distributing medicine illegally to residents in and around the surrounding area. We also observed management accepting cash payments for rent and observed the same, in excess of \$15,000, in the management office on top of the desk in an envelope. Tenants were also sub-leasing their apartments to field workers for several hundred dollars a month. Assaults were becoming commonplace and the area had an attempted homicide within the last year related to drinking. Trash bins had become a playground for young children and a majority of the residents and neighborhood were in fear for their safety, lives and property. We also observed walkways and balconies completely blocked with personnel items and trash. There was no on-sight manager and the Security Company hired local gang members as their officers. Gang members were also given free rent to "keep an eye" on the complex.

My partner and I ran crime statistics on the complex, walked around the location to make personal observations and spoke to residents in the complex and surrounding area about the problems related to the building. We spoke with patrol officers that worked in the area and gathered information and obtained feedback from them. Officers had been told by supervisors prior to our project not to go into the complex unless there was another police unit with them due to officer safety issues.

We initiated a POP Project/Abatement in June of 1997. We have a member of the Oceanside Code Enforcement Department working directly with our team and had advised him of the code violation issues. The fire department was also notified of related fire code violations, and the Oceanside City Attorney's Office and the San Diego District Attorney's Office were advised of all on-going problems at our target location. We immediately set up a meeting with the owners and the above city departments to discuss the problems and plan a problem-solving strategy. Management, along with bank representatives, stated they would work with the police and the City of Oceanside to resolve all problems relating to the apartment complex located at 4750 Calle Las Positas.

Since our meeting in January of 1998, and due to all entities above combining efforts and executing our step-by-step problem solving strategy, crime related incidents at the location have almost completely dropped to zero, as have calls for service. Also, the property has gone into escrow and the new potential owners have stated they will not close escrow until all of our demands are met and the problems are resolved. Ultimately, our goal was to reduce the fear of local residents through the elimination of the occurrence of gang related incidents. We also wanted to improve the living conditions for the tenants of 4750 Calle Las Positas and surrounding neighbors. Our combined efforts and innovative problem-solving methods proved to be tremendously successful.

## **1998 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE**

### **IN PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING**

*Submitted by Officer Chris Carnahan of Oceanside Police Department*

#### **SCANNING:**

##### **1. What was the nature of the problem?**

For the past two and one half years, up to January 1998, tenants have occupied and management has allowed, used and permitted the apartments of 4750 Calle Las Positas in such a manner so as to constitute a public nuisance. The types of regular and continuous activities that would take place in this complex include attempt homicide, shootings, assault and battery with a vast array of weapons, vandalism, graffiti, sale and use of illegal narcotics. Tenants have engaged in fights with gang members (Mesa Locos gang) and have encouraged and/or participated in the drinking of alcoholic beverages by juveniles.

Curfew violations are common place and abandoned vehicles blocked parking spaces. Illegal vendors sell items in front of the apartment complex and from within several of the individual apartments. Reports of numerous city code violations were reported to the Oceanside Code Enforcement Department. Trash bins overflow and children are observed playing in the trash. Balconies are completely blocked with personnel items including mattresses, trash, etc. which poses a fire hazard. Additionally, some of the tenants are members of the local

gang (Mesa Locos gang) and have placed the majority of the residents of the complex and the neighborhood in fear of their safety, lives and property.

**2. How was the problem identified?**

Crime statistics were obtained for the time period of the last two years for the complex. Also, tenants and neighborhood children assisted my partner and I with identifying the problem.

**3. Who identified the problem?**

Having successfully completed two abatements on drug and gang residences, my partner and I took this opportunity to put Problem-Oriented Policing to a much larger test.

**4. Far more problems are identified than can be explored adequately. How and why was this problem selected from among other problems?**

There are several problems in the immediate area; however, this problem seemed to be the center-most "hub" for the majority of the activity.

**5. What was the initial level of diagnosis/unit of analysis?**

On June 1, 1997, we initiated a S.A.R.A. Project on the property at 4750 Calle Las Positas. We hoped to reduce calls for service and lessen the fear of local residents brought about by gang violence. Ultimately, my goal was to improve living conditions for the residents within the complex as well as the surrounding

neighborhood. At the same time, we also initiated nuisance abatement on the property. Before identifying the property as a public nuisance, code enforcement officials had to conduct independent inspections of the property. Our findings, along with the findings of code enforcement, were referred to the city attorney who reviewed the information and sent a letter to the owner with a date for an informal hearing.

**ANALYSIS:**

x

**1. What methods, data and information sources were used to analyze the problem?**

We analyzed the problem by personal observation and by gathering crime statistics for the complex and the immediate area. As a member of the department's N.E.T.Work team, we are tasked with identifying and tackling community problems as quickly as possible. We questioned the tenants and local residents of the area, including local gang members. We also attended several community meetings with local residents and area business personnel regarding the problem. We even acquired information about the problem from local children during bicycle safety fairs, K-9 demonstrations, and field trips that we coordinated for the area's youth.

**2. History: How often and how long was it a problem?**

The problems had been ongoing for approximately five years.

**3. Who was involved in the problem and what were their respective motivations, gains and losses?**

The police department was the first entity to respond to the problem. Later, we called upon Oceanside Code Enforcement, Oceanside City Attorney's Office, San Diego District Attorney's Office, U.S. Border Patrol, Libby Lake Boys and Girls Club and San Luis Rey Police and Resource Center, the complex's security and the owner of the complex to assist us with our endeavors.

**4. What harms resulted from the problem?**

Calls for service were increasing on a daily basis, as were reports from victims of violent crimes. Neighborhood children joining the local gang then observed loitering, drinking in public, and being in possession of alcohol and tobacco. Narcotics activity, illegal vending, graffiti and curfew violations were on the increase. Tenants were fearful for their safety disrespected the property along with the surrounding neighborhood.

**5. How was the problem being addressed before the problem-solving project? What were the results of those responses?**

An abatement attempt was initiated approximately three years prior to my initiation of my POP Project. However, the past officers involved left the team and there was no follow-up by the city or police department. Gang violence had decreased for a few months that followed. However, the incidents soon resumed and increased dramatically.

**6. What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying Conditions that precipitated the problem?**

A primary contributing factor to all problems described was that there was no strong managerial force in place during the day and no manager at night (which is a state violation). There were no rules or guidelines set at the property such as "no loitering"<sup>1</sup>, "no drinking", trespass laws, etc., thus no visible warning signs. The day managers accepted cash for rent and would have as much as \$15,000 dollars in a desk drawer overnight until they could make a deposit the following day.

Many of the tenants would sub-lease their apartments to migrant field workers. For instance, in a two bedroom apartment we found as many as 10-15 sleeping bags on the floor and each worker would pay anywhere from \$50-100 dollars a week. Illegal stores were selling their wares in various apartments. We saw lines of people, outside the doors of certain apartments, buying products at a greatly increased price. The people leasing the apartment would make from \$250.00 to \$500.00 dollars per day in "tax free" money. Gang members had control of and were renting several apartments in the complex, which became a safe haven for others gang members.

**7. What situational information was needed to better understand the problem?**

We obtained the history of the complex through code enforcement and our crime statistics regarding how often and when the major occurrences would happen.

**8. Was there an open discussion with the community about the problem?**

We had several members of the community give us information on what was happening at the complex. At The Boys and Girls Club gang members of the local gang would stand on the street in front of their location and fire handguns in the air and scare the children and retreat into the apartment complex when police arrived. Drugs were being sold in and around the complex as observed by officers working N.E.T.Work and patrol as well as citizens in and around the immediate area of the apartment complex.

**RESPONSE:**

**1. What range of possible response alternatives was considered to deal with the problem?**

The initial list of response methods included:

Day and night, walk/drive through by patrol units and N.E.T.Work officers.

Target curfew, drinking in public, minors in possession of tobacco and other gang related violations. All gang members should be stopped, searched and a photo taken. Warrant checks should be made of all gang members.

The main office should not accept cash anymore only check or money order.

And, most importantly, a list was given to the owners and property managers as a guideline to successful resolution of problems described. The list included the following:

- Employ a licensed and professional full-time on-site manager, fluent in English and Spanish and/or any other language, which is spoken as a primary language by any of the tenants. State law presently requires the complex to retain a licensed manager and they were currently in violation of that law;
- Management should attend a certified course on tenant screening available in San Diego;
- Adopt a new rental agreement that makes it cause for eviction if an individual violates the law regarding the possession or possession for sale and any gang activity or harboring of gang members.
- Supply the manager with a list names of all tenants and occupants in the unit as well as produce a valid California license or identification card at time of applying for occupancy; also current paycheck stubs or any documentation of the source of income and all rent shall be made by check or cashier's check. Also, a background checks of tenants prior to renting for the last five years.
- Employ state licensed, uniformed and armed security agents from a reputable and licensed security agency, to patrol the premises and immediately surrounding areas seven days a week, between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.;
- Install security gates at the front entrance to the building and issue keys/key cards to lawful residents and to the police and fire departments;
- Require that upon entering and exiting the premises, all visitors must produce identification to either the manager or security officer and then sign and date a log book listing the dwelling unit and the person being visited;



- Affix or paint apartment building numbers on the roof of each apartment building to ensure their visibility to police air patrol. Affix apartment numbers on the door of each unit that are visible from the through ways in the complex;
- Place a lighted map of the complex at the front entrance;
- Erect fences around the property to preclude loitering in the building and its premises;
- Restrict parking to tenants only and require that tenants park their cars in the designated parking space for their unit and require visitors to park their vehicles in a visitor lot located in front of the office with a visitor card with the apartment number of the tenant he/she is visiting;
- > Post in visible and conspicuous locations in and around the premises signs indicating "No trespassing, No drugs, No drug dealers, No loitering, No weapons, No drinking of alcoholic beverages" and "The Oceanside Police Department makes regular and frequent patrols of these premises". The manager and security officers shall vigorously enforce these orders;
- Have a "Zero" tolerance policy concerning drugs and gangs. Evict tenants involved in illegal substance abuse or gang activity;
- Institute and enforce a curfew as to loitering outside apartment areas from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.;
- Sign a 602 PC order and keep it on file with the police department. Prohibit the Mesa Locos street gang or any other known street gang to meet, congregate or loiter on the property at any time;

- The managers and security will meet weekly with the Oceanside Police Department N.E.T.Work Officers and discuss concerns and issues relating to the property, methods to properly enforce the restrictions and policies they develop;
- Immediately report incidents of domestic violence laws by coordinating informational orientations with Libby Lake Resource Center and other community organizations;
- Organize a safe recreational area for the children at the complex;
- Install effective high intensity lighting throughout the interior and exterior areas of the building and on the exterior of the complex. Also, immediately replace any worn or damaged lighting;
- Remove all abandoned or disabled vehicles from the property and promptly remove all debris, including abandoned furniture and appliances on and around the perimeter of the property. Within 24 hours of its application, remove all graffiti from exterior and interior areas of the building and apartments, including stairways, halls, parking areas, laundry room, etc.;
- Promptly correct all building code violations;
- Prohibit private markets or sales of merchandise from any unit or from any of the open parking areas of the complex;
- Refrain from employing present or past gang members in the operations, security or management of your complex.

**2. What responses did you use to address the problem?**

Our first meeting was with the police department, CEOs heads, the city attorney's office, and the district attorney's office, code enforcement, the building department and security. We assigned bicycle patrols in the area, constantly walked the complex and the immediate area, became involved with the nearby Boys and Girls Club, assisted with a clean-up project involving the park area behind the complex, and walked through the complex several times a week with code enforcement updating the progress of our requests. We then set meetings with the city attorney and managers every week at the complex. Because several of the tenants of 4750 Calle Las Positas threw their trash over the rear fence and into the park, we organized the clean up of Libby Lake which is directly behind the complex.

### **3. How did you develop a response as a result of your analysis?**

Because there was only one way into the area, gang members would post lookouts that would signal other gang members when they would see a patrol car approaching. Therefore, we opted to ride bicycles in the area. Inept security at the complex was another. Security officers were found inside apartments during their shift and fraternizing with other tenants instead of walking and handling problems inside and around the complex. They would also be found off the property drinking coffee up to two miles away. We suggested to the owners that they should hire another more reputable company. Weekly meetings kept us up to date on the improvements with the complex.

**4. What resources were available to help solve the problem?**

The resources available were our department's N.E.T.Work Team, other patrol officers that worked the area, Code Enforcement Officer George Sanders who is permanently assigned to our team, and the city/district attorney's.

**5. What did you intend to accomplish with your response plan?**

We intended to rid the location of gang member's living/taking refuge in the apartment complex. We also wanted the property cleaned up by ridding of graffiti, illegal stores, loiterers, drinking in public, assaults and gang activity. It was important to also get a new security team in place. Thus, law abiding citizens would then be free of the fear of gang violence and can enjoy a better living environment.

**6. What was done before you implemented your response plan?**

Patrol only entered the complex in response to radio calls. They were forewarned to have at least two units handling calls at this location. So, police did not patrol the complex, as later when assigned to by this project. Gang members sometimes were hired as security for the complex and terrorized the tenants.

**7. Who was involved in the response to your problem?**

The individual officers involved in the "response phase" were N.E.T.Work Officer's Chris Carnahan and Dan Sullivan, and Code Enforcement Officer

George Sanders. Later, we involved the other two N.E.T.Work Officer's Tale and Jones who also patrol the area.

## **ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. What were the results?**

Gang members were evicted from the complex and released from employment with the Security Company. A new security company was hired and two officers are now on the complex (outside walking) from 4 p.m. to 6 a.m. The drinking in public violations is now nonexistent due to police and management efforts. If caught drinking the tenant will be evicted immediately. The loitering problem has also been eliminated.

All the illegal stores in the complex were closed down and violators were cited and the department of health confiscated merchandise. The manager has started to install two front gates and will eventually surround the complex with an iron fence. Numerous problem tenants were evicted and the narcotic problem ceased to exist on the complex. Signs were posted that read: "No trespassing, No drugs, No gang activity, No loitering, No drinking in public". Also, new building signs were erected and numbers on each apartment were painted. A 602 PC letter was now on file with the police department. Roof top numbers and building letters were placed on the roof top for easy access for the police air patrol. The managers hired a contractor to improve the lighting of the complex and surrounding area. Since May of 1998, the property has gone into escrow

with the condition that all of the requests that we have made be completed before escrow will close.

N.E.T.Work Officer's verified through crime statistics and citizen contacts that calls for service decreased to practically zero. People that were evicted from the apartment were unable to gain suitable residency at other complexes in the area due to our close contact with other property managers. Tenants told police that they were forced out of the city due to our efforts. We will continue to monitor the complex and monthly meetings will continue with the managers for approximately one year to maintain our effectiveness. This will allow us to track the enforced changes at the complex and measure our success. The complex should close escrow by the end of July 1998.

**AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION:**

**1. What level of the police organization was this problem-solving initiative adopted?**

Our N.E.T.Work Officer's Camahan and Sullivan adopted this problem-solving initiative. Officer's Taele and Jones also assisted Officers Camahan and Sullivan in their endeavors with this project.

**2. Did officer or management receive any training in problem-oriented policing before this project began?**

Officer Camahan had prior training while he was a member of the Los Angeles Police Department and with Oceanside Police Department. Officer Sullivan received training during his attendance at the San Diego Regional Academy.

**3. Were additional incentives given to police officers who engaged in problem solving?**

There were no additional incentives given to N.E.T.Work Officer's who engaged in this project. This was just part of our job description. The Neighborhood Enhancement Team Work Program is based upon the premise that the character and quality of life in a city's neighborhoods is not solely a city staff problem or responsibility, but rather a community problem that can only be successfully addressed through an array of coordinated city efforts, in conjunction with neighborhood self-initiative. The N.E.T.Work Program is committed to reducing citizen fear of crime and calls for assistance. The primary vehicle in achieving this is through the development of a citizen-staff partnership in identifying problems and agreeing on long-range solutions that may or may not be enforcement based. The N.E.T.Work officers are committed to maintaining a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public is the police. The police are the only members of the public that are paid to give full-time attention to duties that are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.

**4. What resources and guidelines were used, if any, by police officers to help them manage this problem-solving initiative?**

Officer Camahan had completed two other abatement projects using the S.A.R.A. model for problem solving approximately six months prior to starting this project.

**5. What general resources were committed to this project?**

Police department personnel, a code enforcement officer, and the city attorney's office as well as the district attorney's office.

**6. Project contact person:**

Contact person for the Oceanside Police Department is Officer Chris Camahan. He can be reached at (760) 966-703 or by pager (760) 414-5148.