

Multi-Housing

Miracles

In 1963, a state of the art, modern apartment complex was built in East Arlington, Texas. The apartments boasted three swimming pools and a children's play area. Located next door was a thriving shopping center and just a few miles up the road was the General Motors plant. The complex filled up quickly and touted a reputation as one of the finest rental properties in Arlington. Residents enjoyed their weekends lounging by the pools or taking in a day of bowling or going to the movies located next-door at the shopping center.



ARLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

EAST ARLINGTON DISTRICT

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Multi-Housing Miracles

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Multi-Housing Miracles (The story unfolds)

Over the next thirty-eight years with changes in the economic base of the area there was a dramatic shift in the social and economic demographics in the community as a whole. The complex now known as "La Joya" had suffered considerable years of neglect along with several ownership changes. The property's appearance declined as well as the quality of life for the residents and the surrounding neighborhood.

The property was in a state of decay. With each new owner came limited renovations that stopped with a fresh coat of paint. The once bustling shopping center fell prey to larger and more modern shopping malls in other areas of town. These new developments enticed economic development and growth to the North and West areas of Arlington.

This apartment went from one of the affluent to one of the impoverished. Forty percent of the complex became subsidized by public housing. Drugs and violence were rampant and was moving into the surrounding neighborhoods. The once sparkling swimming pools were now dilapidated holes full of cloudy water.

The management also became part of the problem. Managers were involved in criminal activities that included minor infractions such as looking the other way while illegal activity took place, to the extreme of rental scams targeting illegal aliens. Multiple families were allowed to live in single units; criminal background checks were either not done or ignored. There was no enforcement of "house rules" to address the quality of life issues. Curfews and rules on drinking were non-existent, which made it dangerous to come and go without fear of becoming a victim.

The complex had become an eyesore, a nuisance to the community and without a doubt, a huge police department issue. The outrageous calls for service daily along with the huge case load for offenses committed not only got the attention of the neighborhood Citizens on Patrol organizations, but the Police Administration as well.

Is this story different than what any other city deals with at one time or another? Not really, what is different is the commitment by the **ARLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT**, and other city entities, the property owners, and property management to create a sense of ownership and a better quality of life for those who sought it.

Multi-Housing Miracles

(Plan put into action)

In 1999 an effort was launched that joined together forces from Arlington's finest.

With the assistance from:

- / Arlington Code Enforcement
- ✓ Arlington Housing
- / Arlington Police Geographic Detective
- Arlington Police Store Front Officer
- / Arlington Police Narcotics Unit
- / Arlington Police Crime Analysis Specialist
- / City of Arlington Nuisance Abatement Team
- / Local Citizens Group
- Neighboring Church
- Y Arlington Police Crime Prevention Unit
- / Property Owners and Management
- Geographic Team of Beat Officers

This team worked collectively with the center point of contact being Officer Sindi Folkers, who had been assigned the task of coordinating all bodies to transform the complex into a safe secure apartment community where residents could enjoy a peaceful atmosphere.

Officer Folkers was assigned to the complex in February of 2000 and worked with the complex through September of the same year on a one to one basis. The first issue to be addressed was the large number of calls for service. As she compiled this data, it became apparent that this complex had several incidents of the "Required Selected Offenses" needed to call the property into Nuisance Abatement. During this process the officer worked with management and the Nuisance Abatement team to address all police related issues with the following results:

Calls for service have dropped by 82%

Selected offensives are down by 70%

Drug related calls dropped 84%

After September, Officer Folkers continued to monitor the statistics for the complex to make the management aware of any possible problems. With the guidelines put in place through the Nuisance Abatement preceding the complex continued to have success with lower calls for service, but also a more stable living environment for their residents.

Further questions can be answered by:

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INTRODUCTION

The city of Arlington, Texas is located between Dallas and Fort Worth. It has a current population of 322,378. It is home to the Texas Rangers Baseball Club, Six Flags over Texas, and Hurricane Harbor. It also has several major industries and retail outlets. East Arlington was the first heavily developed area fueled by the opening of the General Motors Plant in 1958. Single-family housing, apartments and retail shopping centers flourished in the area. Since then the housing and retail outlets that were state of the art for their time have become outdated and substandard by today's standard.

In 1989 the Arlington Police Department adopted the concept of Community Based Policing. Officers were taught to interact with the citizens they serve and to form closer relationships with businesses and residents. In 1996 the department took it one step further and implemented Geographical Based Community Policing. A modern police facility was built in the heart of East Arlington and officers and supervisors were given twenty-four hour responsibility over their areas and worked as a team to address all of the issues in their beats. Geographic policing stressed problem solving, team building and the use of nontraditional approaches to dissect the problems and attack the root causes.

SCANNING

While the La Joya Apartments had been a nuisance to East Arlington for several years, the opening of the new police station and the development of community groups in the area led to an increase in citizens complaints. The citizens had a sounding board and they utilized it to the fullest. Officers newly assigned to the area and trained in geographic policing echoed the citizen's complaints. A "hot spot" was born and officers

began a journey to eliminate a community problem.

Citizens and officers working as a team made the following observations:

The La Joy a Apartments was an old complex. Built in 1963, the apartments had not weathered the years gracefully. The owners had not invested any money to modernize or even maintain the standards of the property.

Y The property had numerous code violations.

t- Citizens complained of drug activity in and around the location.

The complex, though smaller than most, in Arlington had more criminal offenses occur on the property than complexes of equal or larger size.

- The police department spent a disproportionate amount of manpower answering disturbance calls at the complex.

ANALYSIS

i- The apartment complex is 38 years old and has changed ownership numerous times.

There are 184 units in the complex. Though each new owner claimed newly renovated apartments the renovations usually consisted of window dressing with no attempt to fix the major problems.

- Known drug traffickers had moved into the complex.

f The complex had four managers between 1996 and 1998.

➤ Public housing had increased from one apartment in 1996 to sixty-six in 1998.

y The owners and property management team were from out of town and did not take an active role in the management of the complex.

✓ The last manager in 1998 was involved in unethical and illegal activity that led to a decline in the quality of life for the residents within the complex. This activity included

illegal rent scams that targeted illegal aliens. Cash was being accepted for the rent on apartments that were shown vacant on the owners list. Monies earmarked for improvements were embezzled. The manager allowed multiple families to live in single apartments and frequently disregarded required background checks.

In a one-year period from October 1, 1998 to September 30, 1999 there *were* **199 offenses** that occurred on the property and the police responded to **755 calls for service**.

Y Top five offenses were:

| | |
|---|----|
| Assault | 33 |
| Criminal Mischief | 14 |
| Theft | 15 |
| e Burglary of Motor Vehicle | 8 |
| e Theft or Attempted Theft of Motor Vehicle | 7 |

RESPONSE

A team was assembled to address all of the issues associated with the complex. The team included different departments from within the police department and several other city departments as well as community groups in the area. Members of the team from the police department and their role in the problem solving effort are:

Sector Lieutenant: Since La Joya had been identified as a "Hot Spot", Lieutenant Allen implemented several different initiatives for the complex and made it part of her work plan item agenda. She set the goals to reduce offenses by 25% in one year.

Beat Sergeant and beat officers: Sergeant Petty, initiated a Cop-Solve plan

and a Sara Model. Working with the implementation of police actions and encouraged communication between all shifts allowed several crime issues to be squelched before they became of serious nature. The storefront officer coordinated these actions.

Beat Detective: The detective investigated criminal violations on residents and previous managers and also initiated the first meeting with Code Enforcement and Arlington Housing. The beat detective worked very closely with the complex and the storefront officer on any criminal issues that came up.

Storefront Officer: Police department liaison for the complex. She had to research offenses by hand to implement the nuisance abatement proceedings due to inaccurate information available at that time because of a new reporting system being installed. She organized community meetings with the management, worked with Code Enforcement and Housing on property issues and resident issues, then disseminated all information to beat officers, Sergeants and Lieutenant.

Arlington Housing: Participated in committee meetings, froze new housing requests for La Soya to bring them down to a lower percentile, which had gone above the average while under the previous manager. They also investigated all issues involving misconduct by residents that were reported by the management or Arlington Police and also followed up on complaints from the residents on the complex issues.

Y Arlington Code Enforcement: Did a complete property inspection and met with the management to offer any assistance to their maintenance personnel regarding the inspection. They documented violations and followed up on repairs and issued citations if necessary.

Crime Analysis: Maintained statistical information for comparison purposes on a

monthly basis. These reports are still generated on a monthly basis to keep track of any serious fluctuations in the calls for service or offenses that may jeopardize the revitalization of the complex.

Y Property Owner/Management Team: New manager, regional manager and owners renewed interest worked on solutions. They established a curfew, lease violations and put in place a monetary fine schedule for all lease violations. The fine schedule was a great tool for the management when it came to evictions. They also addressed code violations and implemented financial credit checks and criminal history checks.

9 Narcotics: Made undercover buys and arrests, which gave management the tools to evict two residents that were the primary problem. This also gave the management a foundation to build cases on numerous other residents for future evictions.

Y Nuisance Abatement Team: Monitored the statistics through the summer in the event that calls for service would pick up and to offer suggestions for any problems the complex was having.

Neighborhood Crime Watch: Patrolled area, reported violations to management and police. They also have met with the management on several issues that affect the community as a whole.

> **Church:** Participated in neighborhood meeting and built a wrought iron fence between the properties to assist in loitering and illegal dumping issues that had been creating a problem between the neighboring parties.

> **Neighborhood Services:** Participated in the neighborhood meeting to assist in any issues related to their particular division and offered their services to assist with ongoing needs of the residents of the complex and neighborhood.

Y Crime Prevention: Completed a CPTED survey on the property and met with the property management to offer any assistance with recommendations. The management scheduled a Crime Watch program, offering incentives to get the residents to attend. Beat officers and the Storefront officer also attended to assist with any questions during and after the presentation.

ASSESSMENT

i- Calls for Services and Offense comparison- In December 1999, Sector Lieutenant Carolyn Allen added La Joya to her Performance Work Plan for FY 2000. Under the Crime reduction heading, she set a goal to reduce selected Criminal offenses by 25% by September 2000. In the first quarter crime statistics were collected for future comparison and a SARA project was initiated.

i The second quarter -Began several traditional and non-traditional responses from the Police Department, which included collecting data to pursue Nuisance Abatement proceedings, assigning a Store Front officer to work with the management through the abatement process, to assist the management with any criminal issues on property and to also work with Code Enforcement and Arlington Housing with any issues involving residents that had been identified by management as a problem for the success of the partnership. A CPTED survey (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) was completed on the property. A meeting was then set up to explain the survey and offer suggestions and answer any question the manager might have had.

Y The third quarter -Continued the Nuisance Abatement proceedings. Another issue involving La Joya was the mistrust from the surrounding residential community.

In an effort to reconcile the neighborhood leaders and the apartment complex a meeting was set to resolve some long standing issues between these parties.

Officer Folkers coordinated a meeting between La Joya, the neighboring church, the Shopping Plaza and the surrounding neighborhood Citizens on Patrol group to discuss community issues. Also invited to attend was Arlington Code Enforcement and Arlington Neighborhood Services. Through a cooperative effort from all parties these problems were discussed and plans were put in place to address the issues.

The biggest need was a fence between the west side of La Joya and the church (which was built as mentioned above). The church was sandwiched between the complex and the shopping plaza and there were ongoing problems with the congregating of homeless people in the area, who would break into the apartments, drink to a point of being intoxicated and urinate in public. This was a major concern to the church who also runs a day care. The shopping center complained about the residents of the apartment community dumping furniture into their dumpsters on a regular basis, which proved to be extremely costly for the owner. Officer Folkers also directed the management to several community based services to assist in the complex including Mission Arlington, ESL & GED classes, and Boys and Girls Club for youth activities.

> **The fourth quarter** -Finished with La Joya successfully completing the Nuisance Abatement process. There was an 84% reduction in Drug related calls and an 82% reduction in total calls for service. The owners followed several of the recommendations of the CPTED survey, which helped with the decline in calls for service with improvements in lighting and also improvement in the overall

appearance of the complex. With the improvements, the complex started to demonstrate a sense of ownership to the residents. They were no longer afraid to become involved in situations knowing the management would follow up on all complaints.

➤ **Officers and Community opinions-** Over the course of this year, La Joya has been acknowledged by the Arlington Police Department for the work they have done. The Arlington Police Department Crime Prevention Unit has submitted the complex for the "National Association of Town Watch" Project 365 award, and Officer Folkers has received several commendations for the work she has contributed to this project and has strengthened partnerships with other city departments to accomplish the ultimate goal, which was to create a decent living environment for the residents, and a safe work environment for beat officers serving the area. The partnership has continued into the year 2001. Calls for service in the first three months of 2001 have averaged 30 calls a month, which is a 50% decrease comparing month-to-month statistics from October 1998 to September 1999. The complex has continued to screen all potential applicants and now maintains occupancy levels of 92 percent or better whereas when this partnership started they had dropped below 42 percent. With the effort from all involved the real winners were the residents. They now participate in many activities that have been set up by the management. Residents also feel they have an ownership in their community and are no longer afraid to get involved. They will call the police for serious problems where as in the past they would turn their backs and not get involved.

**The most impressive part of this partnership has
been La Joya'a commitment to
their community and the neighborhood embracing
their achievements for the betterment
of all involved.**

APPENDIX

SELECTED OFFENSE COMPARISON
CALLS FOR SERVICE COMPARISON
CODE ENFORCEMENT INSPECTION
CPTED SURVEY

COMMENDATION MEMO

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH MEMO

CHIEF'S REPORT

NUISANCE ABATEMENT TEAM MEMO

LA JOYA MANAGER MEMO

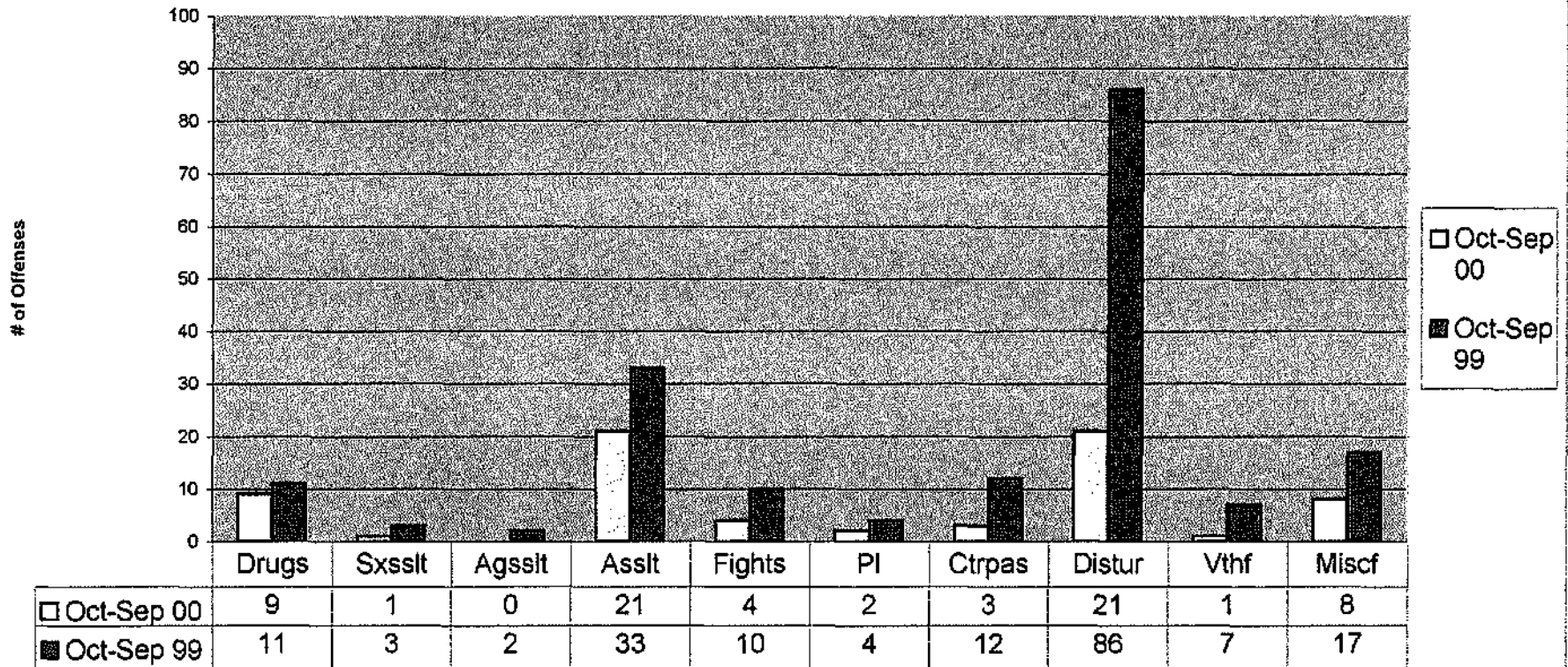
PROJECT 365

LaJoya Selected Offense Comparison Oct. '98 - Sept. '99 vs Oct. '99 - Sept. '00

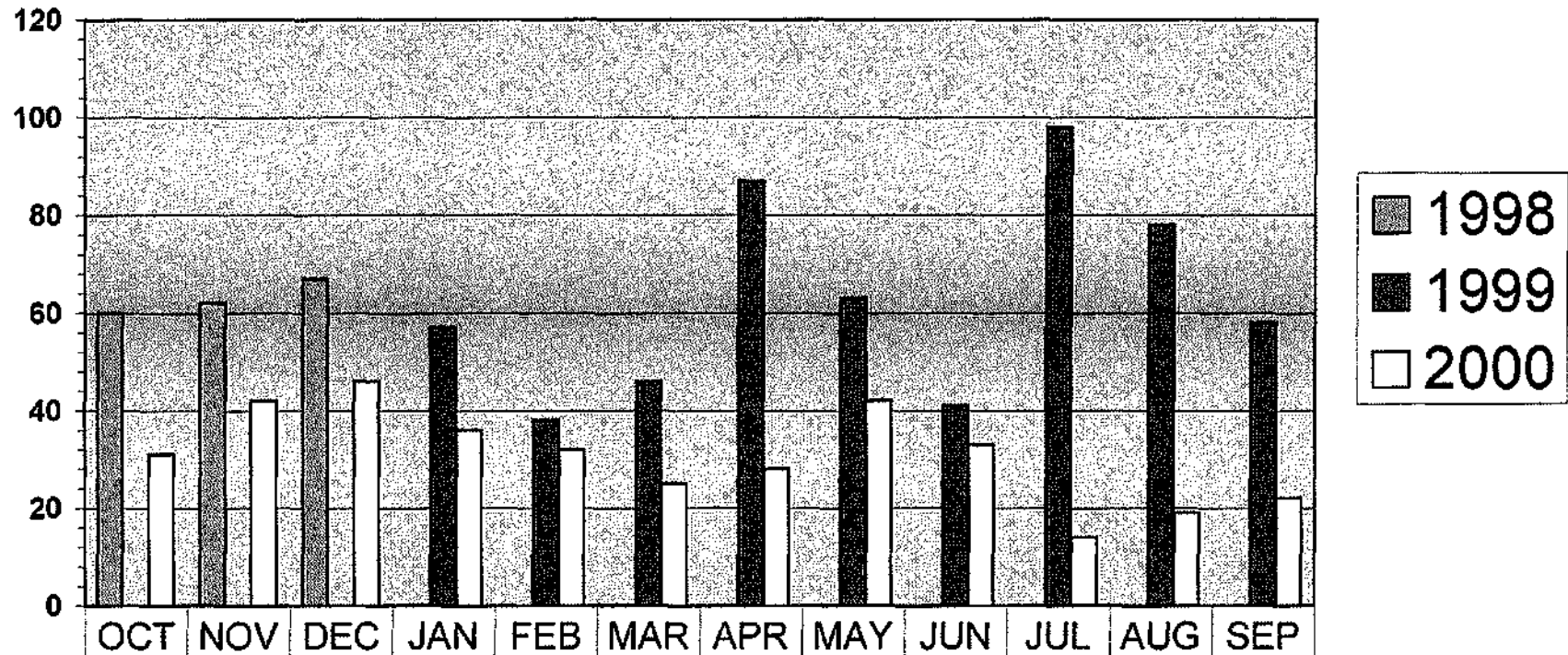
| BEAT | Drugs | ASSAULTS* | | | PUBLIC ORDER OFFENSES | | | | | CRIM. | Total |
|-------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|-----------------------|------|--------|--------|------|-------|-------|
| | | Sxsslt | Agsslt | Asslt | Fights | PI | Ctrpas | Distur | Vthf | Miscf | |
| Oct-Sep '00 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 21 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 21 | 1 | 8 | 70 |
| Oct-Sep '99 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 33 | 10 | 4 | 12 | 86 | 7 | 17 | 185 |
| # DIFF | -2 | -2 | -2 | -12 | -6 | -2 | -9 | -65 | -6 | -9 | -115 |
| % DIFF | -18% | -67% | -100% | -36% | -60% | -50% | -75% | -76% | -86% | -53% | -62% |

* Based on completed/saved reports data available at the time of this report.

LaJoya Selected Offense Comparison Chart



CALLS FOR SERVICE OCT 98- OCT 2000



| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| ■ 1998 | 60 | 62 | 67 | | | | | | | | | |
| ■ 1999 | | | | 57 | 38 | 46 | 87 | 63 | 41 | 98 | 78 | 58 |
| □ 2000 | 31 | 42 | 46 | 36 | 32 | 25 | 28 | 42 | 33 | 14 | 19 | 22 |