

# The Huntington Project

## Summary

### Scanning

The Huntington Place Apartments is a six-building apartment complex consisting of 834 one -bedroom units located in the City of Brooklyn Park, MN. This apartment complex has consumed significant police and city resources. In 2009, calls consisted of burglaries, robberies, and many nuisance complaints. Police identified these issues and began collaborating with other city departments to resolve the chronic issues that were driving city-wide crime statistics. The Department used problem-oriented principles to reduce crime, review root causes of the problems, and enhance the safety and security of Huntington Place residents.

### Analysis

The problems were analyzed using crime analysis data, crime statistics, data from on-site management, and input from other city staff including building inspectors and code enforcement. During that analysis, significant problems were identified consisting of poor door security, poor lighting, lack of on-site security, lack of tenant communication and accountability, and other correctable measures.

### Response

City staff collectively researched and discussed numerous options including capital improvements and security issues. This was accomplished through internet research, networking with crime prevention

staff from other cities, a comprehensive Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) survey, and collaboration with management at other local apartment communities. The research was presented to the Huntington Place management team, and the collaborative decision was that a solution should consist of City staff and Huntington Place management working together to enhance the safety, security, and livability of the apartment residents. Several suggestions from the research were implemented including strategic use of uniformed security officers, on-site door and hallway monitors, and numerous capital improvements including security cameras and improved lighting.

### **Assessment**

An analysis of crime and nuisance statistics after the implementation of the project has shown the following results:

- Calls for service declined 20.89%
- Crimes declined 17.88%
- Burglary declined 44.00%
- Violent Crime declined 64.29%
- Capital improvements were implemented by Huntington Place apartments (lighting, video surveillance, door improvements)
- Tenant selection process improved
- Improved organization culture with staff members who have bought into the improvements and perform their jobs better as a result of the changes.

# The Huntington Project

## Scanning

The City of Brooklyn Park, located on the west bank of the Mississippi River, is the fourth-largest city in the twin-cities metropolitan area and the sixth-largest city in the state. The City occupies approximately 17,020 acres or 27 square miles. Brooklyn Park has approximately 75,000 citizens. The Huntington Place Apartment Complex is in the heart of Brooklyn Park and is comprised of six buildings with a total of 834 one-bedroom apartment units. In the last quarter of 2008, Huntington Place experienced a noticeable increase in crime. In response to that, management at Huntington Place contracted with the Brooklyn Park Police Department for a short period of time to have officers provide foot patrol within the complex during the evening hours, and specifically within the buildings. Officers logged a total of 300 hours of foot patrol in the complex on this detail starting December 5, 2008 and ending January 5, 2009. Later in 2009, management at Huntington Place expressed a desire to contract with the Police Department for additional hours of dedicated foot patrol. The Department advised them that the money would be better spent on capital improvements to address crime problems on a long-term basis.

To define the problem, Huntington Place (HP) had 625 crimes reported in 2009, and other disturbance and nuisance calls contributed to a total of 1045 crime and nuisance calls to HP for that same year. Approximately 64% of the crime and nuisance calls consisted of livability issues (disputes, disturbances, noise complaints, etc.). In addition to measuring overall crime, the Police Department measured specific, significant crimes at HP. Two of those that were measured were burglaries and robberies. Huntington Place burglaries increased from 40 in 2008 to 69 in 2009 for an increase of 72.5%. Robberies on the property increased from 9 to 11 over the course of the same year for an increase of 22%. This increase in criminal activity was perceived as a significant problem by HP residents and City staff.

### **Analysis**

Through crime analysis, several graphs and charts were created to show meaningful data regarding the level of criminal activity at Huntington Place over the last several years. The first graph (shown as Appendix A at the end of this document) shows the total number of crimes reported at Huntington Place Apartments starting with 2004. The graph shows a steady increase in crime each year starting with 234 crimes reported in 2004 and ending with 625 crimes in 2009 for an increase of 166% over 5 years. The increase from 2008 to 2009 was 38%. It is important to recognize that this does not include all police calls to Huntington Place. For example, it does not include calls such as verbal disputes and noise complaints, and it does not include service calls such as medical assists, vehicle lockouts, etc. The second report (shown as Appendix B) is listed as an Incident Summary Report, and it contains a summary of crime and nuisance calls for 2009. It includes the 625 crimes reported in 2009, and it also includes other non-criminal activities such as verbal disputes and noise disturbances. The report documents a total of 1045 calls to Huntington Place for 2009. This information provides a fairly comprehensive view of the calls that generate a police response to the complex, but it does not account for other miscellaneous

assists such as medical calls, vehicle lockouts, etc. It does indicate that about 64% of the crime and nuisance calls consist of livability issues (a combination of the first four categories listed on the report which are disputes, disturbances, noise complaints, etc.). This is a significant portion of the calls. In addition to measuring overall crime, the Police Department measures specific, significant crimes on a citywide basis. Two of the crimes that are considered are burglaries and robberies. Huntington Place burglaries increased from 40 (2008) to 69 (2009) for an increase of 72.5%. Robberies on the property increased from 9 to 11 over the course of the same year for an increase of 22%. Huntington Place was compared with a similar sized apartment complex in Brooklyn Park, and that other complex reported a total of 304 crimes in 2009. Regarding the measurement of burglaries and robberies in 2009, the other complex had a total of 11 burglaries (Huntington Place had 69) and 6 robberies (Huntington Place had 11).

During the analysis phase, the Brooklyn Park Police Department also met with City Code Enforcement and Building Inspections to capture their assessment of the physical condition of the Huntington Place complex. Through their assessment, it was determined that the complex generally met City Code requirements but only at a minimum level.

## **Response**

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES**

On behalf of the Police Department, Patrol, Special Operations, and the Investigative Division invested significant time in surveillance at Huntington Place. During the spring of 2009, all three divisions collaborated together for a two-day burglary saturation detail in an attempt to identify burglary suspects. Specifically, they conducted a plain clothes operation that involved a simulated moving situation. Officers displayed a large screen television in the parking lot giving the appearance that a new

tenant was moving into an apartment. There were no arrests made or suspects identified from that detail. In addition to that detail, they spent many hours at varied times of the day doing intelligence based surveillance in an attempt to identify burglary suspects. Special Operations also engaged in surveillance numerous times with a specific focus of loitering and narcotics trafficking. They conducted several enforcement details using informants to purchase narcotics in an attempt to solve narcotics related crimes, and they engaged in surveillance of possible robbery suspects at Huntington Place on several occasions. The focus on Huntington Place as a target of these surveillance details was led by intelligence received through various sources. Patrol and Special Operations also conducted active enforcement of the Department's trespass list specific to Huntington Place. 29 individuals were arrested at the complex for trespassing in 2009.

Special Operations also spent time on a near-weekly basis from July through November of 2009 on bike patrol at Huntington Place. Several arrests were made as a result which include arrests for trespassing, warrants, and possession of a handgun. The Patrol division completed an inventory of every exterior security door at Huntington Place early in 2009. They documented that a significant number of the exterior security doors had inoperable locks. The same inventory was also completed on several occasions by Special Operations, and a formal documentation of that activity was started late in 2009 in an attempt to track the issue. During these door audits, officers noticed that the two of the buildings historically had better door security than the other buildings, and those two buildings have an electronic key fob locking system installed.

The Hennepin County Violent Offender Task Force and the Hennepin County Drug Task Force also participated in enforcement activities at Huntington Place. They executed several search warrants and recovered weapons and narcotics. A total of five guns were recovered at the complex during 2009 that

were directly related to criminal activity. Gang members and other violent offenders were also identified on the property. Special Operations and Patrol assisted Hennepin County Probation on a number of in-home visits to probationers at Huntington Place. Special Operations also conducted several monthly saturation details that included Huntington Place as a part of the focus. Generally, the scope of the saturation details was intelligence driven and included enforcement activities such as identifying robbery and narcotics suspects.

The Brooklyn Park Crime Prevention Unit also logged several hours of activity at Huntington Place in 2009. Specifically, they held nine neighborhood crime watch meetings. Each time, the issues discussed at the crime watch meetings turned to management issues such as inoperable door locks, poor exterior lighting, window locks, parking issues, etc. Crime Prevention gave the residents a number of helpful tips such as a demonstration of door and window locks that are available at affordable prices. Crime Prevention also distributed flyers to the complex on two occasions over the past year. They distributed one flyer in March, 2009 which called attention to the burglaries that were occurring at the complex, and they distributed another one in September, 2009 which was similar but also offered reward money as an incentive for information regarding the burglaries. There were a small number of leads developed from the second flyer but no arrests made. Crime Prevention and the Community Oriented Policing (COPS) Unit also hosted one Bike Rodeo for children at Huntington Place in June, 2009. Finally, the Crime Prevention Unit conducted a comprehensive CPTED study for the complex and came up with numerous recommendations.

## **POLICE INTERACTION WITH MANAGEMENT**

During the course of 2009, the Special Operations Division met with Huntington Management on a few occasions and provided current crime statistics. A major discussion point was several capital improvements that the City believed would enhance the safety and security of residents at Huntington Place. Those capital improvement issues included discussions about the security locks on the exterior doors, window locks, exterior lighting, security fencing and a camera surveillance system. Other issues that were discussed are the use of security personnel at the complex and greater visibility of “No Loitering” signs. The Brooklyn Park Police Department historically had a good working relationship with on-site management personnel at Huntington Place. In particular, there was always an ongoing day-to-day dialog regarding crime issues between the COPS Unit and on-site management. The relationship involved communication regarding problem tenants as well, and management was always responsive to take corrective action in those situations up to and including eviction when it was appropriate. Other City departments also reported a good working relationship with management at Huntington Place. However, City staff generally felt that there was room for improvement in the relationship between Huntington management and the City. The City desired that Huntington management take a timely and aggressive response to address the crime, nuisance, and security issues mentioned above. City staff believed that some of the issues, such as the inoperable security doors and posting of signs, were well within the scope of on-site management’s ability to address, at least at a maintenance level. City staff did not believe that these issues were being addressed to a satisfactory level.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

City staff from several different departments met and discussed a number of options and possible solutions concerning the capital improvements and security issues at Huntington Place. Staff members



conducted research in these areas. Some of this was done through the internet, some involved networking with crime prevention personnel from other cities, and some involved speaking with management at other apartment communities. The information gleaned was intended to provide management at Huntington Place with some guidance and suggestions on these issues. The suggestions are listed below.

### **Exterior Security Doors**

One of the immediate concerns identified regarding safety and security at Huntington Place is the lack of security on the exterior doors. As mentioned earlier, officers repeatedly found doors on the property that had broken locks, and they have found that the same locks were sometimes broken for an extended period of time. They also frequently found locks that were temporarily disabled due to a foreign object, such as a penny, placed in the lock mechanism. Listed below are some of the options suggested by City staff regarding the exterior doors on the property:

- Install an electronic pass key system for each building.
- Utilize an access ID card issued to specific individuals is recommended for access to the buildings to provide greater access accountability.
- Link all buildings together on an alarm wired to the office.
- Install an alarm that activates at an office computer if a door is propped or the lock is unsecure for a predetermined period of time.
- Set a short time-related response protocol for responding to fix unsecure doors/locks (having an outside vendor should be considered).
- Install doorbells or an intercom system at specified entrances for communication with each apartment (This would possibly decrease the number of times a door is propped open while somebody is waiting for a friend, etc.).

- Minimize the number of entrance/exit points on the buildings (subject to code specifications).

This could be accomplished by some of the following suggestions:

- Removal of several locks/doors.
- Install delayed-egress electric release hardware at various points or “emergency only” exits.
- Designate some doors as “exit only” doors.
- Segment the buildings internally to prevent free-reign of the entire building in the event that unauthorized access is gained.

## **Fencing**

Several other apartment complexes were consulted regarding security fencing installed on their properties. Each of the complexes indicated a strong belief that the fencing contributed to the security of their complex and had a significant impact on the reduction of unwanted pedestrian traffic cutting through their properties. Huntington Place was encouraged to consider erecting a wrought-iron decorative fence around the entire property. If a new fence around the entire perimeter was not possible due to the cost, City staff recommended that priority should be given to placing a fence along the portion of the complex that had the highest foot traffic. A shorter decorative fence was also suggested along the front to preserve the aesthetic value of the property and still provide a level of security against unwanted foot traffic.

## **Video Surveillance Systems**

City staff viewed surveillance systems both online and at other apartment locations. Overall, the staff found that most apartment managers expressed positive opinions regarding the usefulness of their camera systems for crime prevention purposes, identification of crime suspects, identifying residents that tampered with locks, and other miscellaneous misconduct. Management also reported that the cameras were beneficial from a liability standpoint on various claims. Possible vendors and successful installations of surveillance systems were located and provided to Huntington Place management. The following were some general suggestions regarding the systems:

- The data should be stored on digital media.
- Camera locations should be considered as follows:
  - One at each entrance to the buildings.
  - One in each laundry room.
  - One at each end of the interior hallways.
  - If possible, two in the middle of each hallway pointing in opposite directions.
  - A minimum of two in each parking lot.
  - One at the main entrance to the complex (possibly on light pole).
  - One at designated pedestrian entrances to the complex (west side).

## **Lighting and Walkways**

The following additions and modifications were recommended regarding lighting and walkways:

- Remove the roof-mounted lights and replace them with free-standing light poles around the parking lot. This would possibly result in an energy savings due to efficient modern lighting.
- Install lighting underneath the canopies by the front entrances.

- Shield the newer wall-pack lights on the garages to reduce glare.
- Install lighting along new sidewalk/asphalt pathways as suggested by the CPTED study.
- Pave suggested patio areas (a comprehensive map of each of these suggested locations was provided to management).
- Install additional lighting in dark areas of the hallways.

### **Windows**

All apartment windows were recommended for replacement as they had minimal security hardware present. However, the ground level windows were pointed out as the greatest priority due to security reasons. The current locking system, which consisted of a pin placed through a hole in the frame, was found to be inadequate in many cases. Suspects were often able to shake the window and cause the pin to fall out of the frame.

### **Other Landscape and Building Improvements**

- Remove grass and install pea gravel in the 3 to 4 feet extending from the buildings to compliment the other positive landscaping improvements that have already been made on the property. This would also create more noise if a suspect walked near the windows.
- Install additional "No Loitering" signs.
- Install more directional signs for each building and for the parking lot exits.
- Provide directional signs inside the buildings for the unit numbers at each entrance.
- Use light colored paint in all the hallways to improve lighting conditions.
- Remove light switches and install motion detection lights in the laundry rooms.
- Implement a visitor parking area to provide proper vehicle identification and accountability.

## **Security Personnel**

Police personnel recently met with the owner of the security company that was currently under contract with Huntington Place. During that meeting, the following issues were found to be of concern:

- Security was used occasionally to deliver newsletters, flyers, etc. which took significant time away from security duties (sometimes 3 to 4 hours per shift).
- Security was not logging door lock issues on their daily log. Unsecure doors were supposed to be documented through a work-order placed to maintenance, but it appeared from repeatedly unsecure doors that this documentation process was not being completed daily or that the doors were not being fixed promptly.
- Security was not scheduled to work past 10 p.m.
- Security was scheduled for only 30 hours per week.

The City had the following recommendations regarding deployment of security personnel at Huntington Place:

- Security should be in uniform and utilize marked squad cars.
- Two security guards should be deployed together at one time.
- Duties should include consistent door checks on all buildings and daily documentation/communication with management on the issue.
- Duties should be limited to appropriate security tasks.
- Duties should include monitoring door alarms and security surveillance.
- Coverage hours should be set by consultation between police, management, and security personnel.
- A parking permit system should be implemented to regulate guest and tenant parking. This should include towing unauthorized vehicles that do not have the proper parking permits.

- Signs should be posted at the property entrance signifying that the complex is patrolled by security.

### **Tenant Selection and Occupancy**

The City was not traditionally been involved in the process of tenant selection at any apartment property. However, it was the City's understanding that Huntington Place uses a selection and screening process that was less stringent than several other area apartment communities such as lower credit scores, etc. The City recommended that the tenant selection process be thoroughly reviewed to provide for careful screening and selection of all potential tenants in order to maximize the stability of the neighborhood. The City recommended a strong focus on consistency of selection standards throughout the process, regardless of occupancy rates. The City also recommended re-examining the issue of resident caretakers at Huntington Place. The City felt that active caretaker involvement on site would create a feeling of ownership and buy-in on the part of staff members, and it would contribute to greater hands-on control and management of crime and livability issues at the property. It was suggested that the job description for those individuals should include crime prevention activities including active reporting of crimes, suspicious circumstances, etc.

### **MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

Huntington Place Management responded by reviewing an extensive document that was prepared for them by City staff. They also analyzed their own data concerning identified problem apartments and residents, foot traffic patterns, and livability complaints, and they then worked with City staff to implement a number of the recommendations from the City and a number of their own solutions. The improvements are listed as follows:

- Installed numerous security cameras in strategic locations, and they provided wireless access to these cameras at the Police Department.
- Made significant lighting improvements to the interior and exterior of all six buildings.
- Installed all new security locks on the 28 doors and re-keyed each of the locks to minimize past tenants from accessing the buildings.
- Significantly reduced a number of unnecessary access doors to the buildings to provide greater building security.
- Added uniformed security and on-site building monitors that work daily and have a regimented schedule of checking security doors and locks on the property
- Posted numerous “No Loitering” signs at strategic locations on the property
- Carefully analyzed and improved the tenant screening process
- Established regularly scheduled meetings with City staff to foster communication and a good working relationship.

### **Assessment**

Through the efforts and collaboration of the Brooklyn Park Police Department, City officials and the Huntington Place ownership and management team, the Huntington Place apartments have seen a tremendous decrease in overall crime and calls for service as well as many capital improvements on the property. The success of this project also attracted media attention from several local news outlets. Overall crime has declined 17.88% since this project began, but the most significant improvements have been realized on serious crimes. Burglaries have declined 44.00%, and total violent crime has decreased by a total of 64.29% (see graph below). The Brooklyn Park Police Department and Huntington Place staff has observed a significant decrease in the amount of loitering and trespassing issues that once were

rampant within the complex, and they have used the surveillance system to obtain evidence related to several felony-level crimes.

This project also attracted positive media attention and the following outlets conducted news stories regarding this project:

- 05/06/11, Channel 5 KSTP Minneapolis: <http://brooklynpark-brooklyncenter.kstp.com/news/business/brooklyn-pk-shows-how-tackle-crime-apt-complexes/75587>
- 05/04/11, Channel 12:  
<http://www.twelve.tv/news/newsitem.aspx?newsid=324&newsitemid=16012>

This project was presented to the Brooklyn Park City Council in May of 2011. The City Council was thankful towards city staff and Huntington Place management for the positive changes and overall reduction in crime.

### **Agency and Officer Information**

#### *Key Project Team Members:*

Inspector Todd Milburn

Sgt Marcus Erickson

Officer Timothy Mitchell

#### *Project Contact Person:*

Inspector Todd Milburn

5400 85<sup>th</sup> Ave N

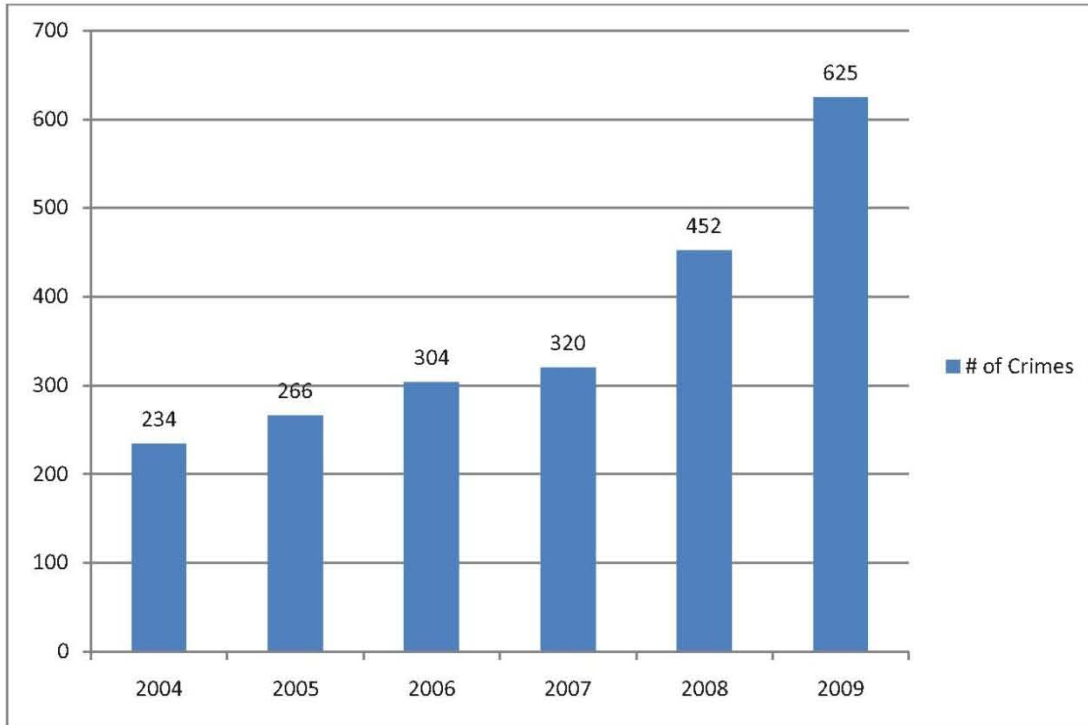
Brooklyn Park, MN 55443

763-493-8234



## Brooklyn Park Police Department Crime at Huntington Place Apts by year

Appendix A



75% of the crimes reported in 2009 had an apartment number in the location field. The remaining 25% occurred in common areas such as parking lots, hallways, and laundry rooms.



## Brooklyn Park Police Department

### Incident Summary Report

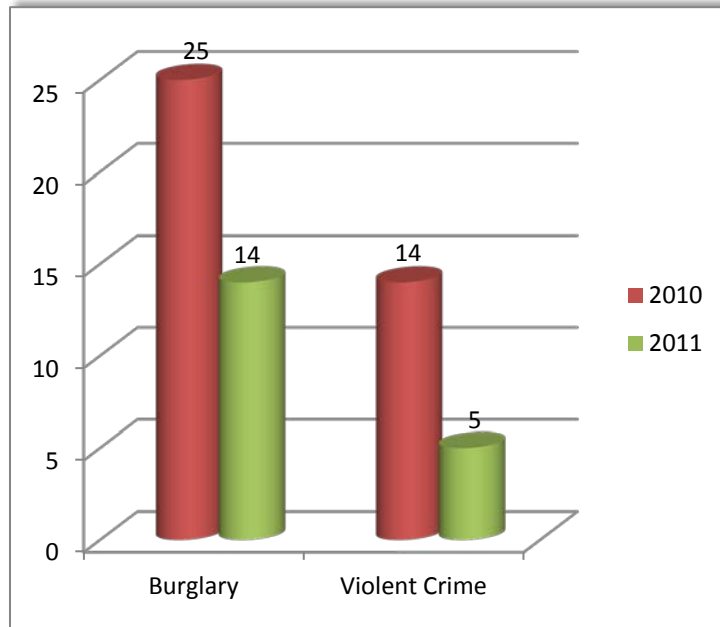


#### *Summary of crime and nuisance at Huntington Place Apartments in 2009*

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>COUNT</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
VERBAL DISPUTE/CIVIL	284	27.18%
DOC/LURKING/DISTURBING PEACE	183	17.51%
LOUD DISTURBANCE/PARTY/NOISE	136	13.01%
DAMAGE TO PROP/TRESPASS/LITTERING	70	6.70%
BURGLARY	69	6.60%
DOMESTIC ASSAULT/MISD&GROSS MISD	63	6.03%
ASSAULT/TERR THREATS	57	5.45%
THEFT/NO PAY	30	2.87%
DRUGS	23	2.20%
THEFT FROM AUTO	19	1.82%
CRIMES AGAINST ADMINI&JUSTICE	16	1.53%
DOMESTIC ASSAULT/FELONY	15	1.44%
MISC/JUV/LIQUOR/PARK	15	1.44%
VEHICLE THEFT/UUMV	15	1.44%
THEFT RELATED/BIKES&LIFTERS	14	1.34%
ROBBERY	11	1.05%
CRIMES AGAINST FAMILY/CHILD NEGLECT	7	0.67%
CR SEX/CSC/INCEST	4	0.38%
WEAPONS/EXPLOSIVES	4	0.38%
COUNTERFEIT/FORGERY	2	0.19%
ORDER FOR PROTECTION VIOLATION	2	0.19%
TRAFFIC ACCIDENT/DWI	2	0.19%
* Department Classification *	1	0.10%
ARSON/NEGLECT FIRES	1	0.10%
ESCAPE/FLEE OFFICER	1	0.10%
OBSCENITY/EXPOSURE	1	0.10%
<b>TOTAL RECORDS:</b>	<b>1045</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Crime Statistics after City Intervention

	2010	2011	1 year percentage change
Burglary	25	14	-44.00%
Violent Crime	14	5	-64.29%



\*January thru April for each year

# Capital Improvements

Main entry side shot before



Main entry side shot after



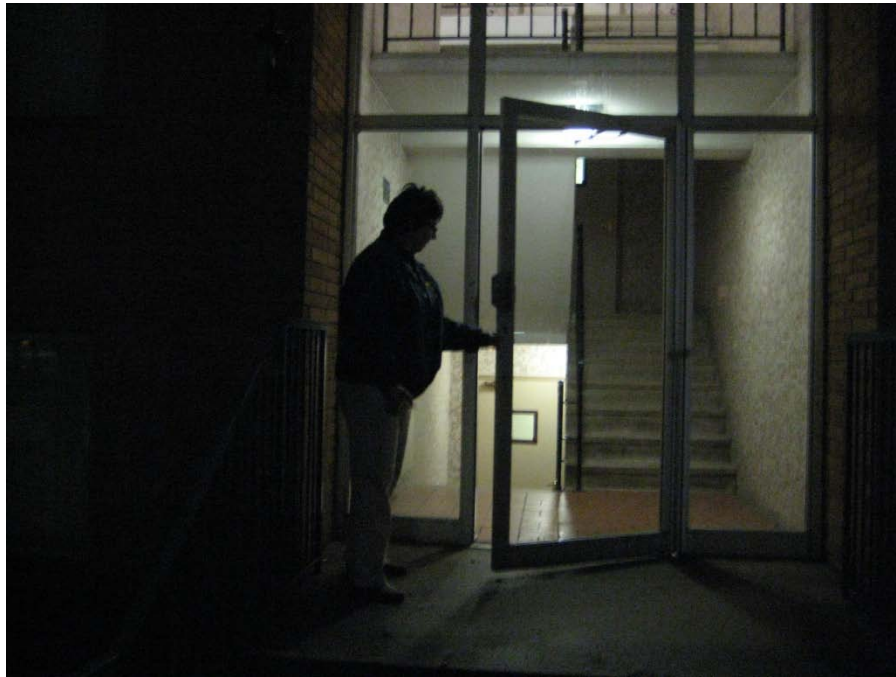
Parking lot before



Parking lot after



Main entry before



Main entry after



Hallways before



Hallways after



13 security cameras installed



Web-based monitoring by Police



rs



Before



After

