

**Stonehedge Place Apartment Complex
600 Martin Street**



**Submitted by Officer Bryan Franke
Longmont Police Department**

April 24, 2002

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600 Martin Street
Longmont, CO

Longmont Police Department
225 Kimbark Street
Longmont, CO 80501
(303) 651-8555

Bryan Franke
Officer, Patrol/K-9 Unit
bryan.franke@ci.longmont.co.us

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Problem Oriented Policing Project Summary

Summary

Stonehedge Apartments Problem Oriented Policing Project is based on problems that were identified by residents of the apartment complex as well as beat officers. It was initiated to address the problems occurring within this apartment complex associated with drug dealing, retaliation against those reporting crimes to the police, large gang fights and destruction of property.

Scanning

- Open air drug dealing occurring in the parking lots of the complex.
- Increase in volume and frequency of vandalism and gang graffiti.
- Fights were escalating and involved weapons.
- Increased level of fear for residents living in the apartment complex.
- Increase in the amount, and severity of retaliation.

Analysis

- Juveniles being used as lookouts for drug dealers.
- Informal method of communicating police presence established by drug dealers.
- Sense of security for gang members and drug dealers due to lay out of complex and grounds.
- Reoccurring loud parties and loud stereos.
- Law abiding families afraid for their safety.
- No cooperation from residents with police personnel.
- High level of fear experienced by residents regarding gang members and drug dealers.
- The frequency of disturbances and weapons calls was increasing.
- Gang graffiti was repeatedly being made.
- Previous police efforts were based on department needs and did not include community input.
- Previous police efforts lacked long term involvement.
- Crime analysis of calls for service to identify busiest days.
- Meetings with residents were held to learn their concerns.

Response

- Crime Watch Meeting (COMPSTAT) was held to discuss issues and possible responses.
- Command staff meeting held to discuss proposal and resource allocations.
- A multi-function plan was approved and implemented.

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- Door to door contact with every apartment in the complex to introduce beat officers and hand out flyers with contact phone numbers for police allowing resident anonymity.
- Dedicated team of patrol officers, working in conjunction with our Special Enforcement Unit (Narcotics Unit), to take multi-faceted proactive enforcement action in and around complex.
- Established and maintained a relationship with complex residents and manager of complex.
- Communication with out of state complex management corporation established.

Assessment

- Calls for service increased during this time due to the large increase in officer initiated activity, however the severity of the calls for service that impact the quality of life for the residents have decreased dramatically.
- Residents are showing pride in ownership by decorating for various.
- Residents are now calling the police to report crimes and suspicious activity.
- Residents initiate conversation with officers on foot patrol.
- Open air drug dealing eliminated.
- Drugs being stored and used in the apartment complex greatly reduced.
- Blatant gang activity greatly reduced.
- Gang *graffiti* greatly reduced.
- Complex manager was replaced, along with maintenance supervisor.
- Complex grounds were cleaned up and modified (CPTED).
- \$100,000 neighborhood revitalization grant awarded to the newly formed Kensington Neighborhood Group, in which this complex is located.
- A police substation will be located within the complex, by the management corporation, in the near future.

DESCRIPTION

Longmont, Colorado is a city of approximately 80,000 persons located just north of the Denver metropolitan area. In December of 2000 it encompassed approximately 21.97 square miles (Longmont Community Profile 11101), and has been growing steadily since that time. According to the 2000 Census, married couples comprised 55% of Longmont's households. Those persons aged 35-44 make up the largest age segment (12,797 persons), followed by those persons aged 25-34 (10,756). Persons of Hispanic origin constitute 19% of Longmont's population (Longmont Community Profile 11/01).

Stonehedge Apartment Complex is a 114-unit apartment complex encompassing one square block. All of the units are subsidized with Section 8 vouchers. This complex is one of Longmont's top calls for service locations, requiring a significant amount of Longmont Police Department's resources on a regular basis.

The Stonehedge Apartment Complex Problem Oriented Policing Project's sole purpose was to improve the quality of life for those living in and around the Stonehedge Apartment Complex.

SCANNING

As early as 1988 the Stonehedge Apartment complex has been known for its high volume of crime, gang activity, and drug trafficking/usage that occurs in this complex.

Over the years several attempts by the Longmont Police Department had been made to resolve these problems. Initially, each attempt proved to be effective, but within one year's time the complex would return to its original condition.

In 2001 the Longmont Police Department responded to this complex to arrest a known gang member with a violent background and numerous outstanding arrest warrants. This situation evolved into a barricaded suspect situation, which was eventually resolved with the person being subdued with a Taser and arrested. Because of the number of residents that were displaced during this incident, a community meeting was held to share information with the residents and provide an explanation for the displacement. 'El Comite' (a committee designed to assist the Spanish community with concerns regarding a variety of topics) and the Longmont Community Relations office facilitated this meeting. Present was the Chief of the Longmont Police Department, Michael Butler, along with additional police command staff. Community Relations personnel, El Comite personnel, and residents of the complex also attended. Prior to adjourning the residents were offered an opportunity to ask questions and/or express any concerns they had. At this time resident's expressed concerns with the high volume of drug dealing/usage, gang activity and retaliation. With this information, coupled by the high volume of calls for service/activity within the complex the Longmont Police Department decided to take a fresh look at this complex.

Several steps were taken to identify the root causes to problems occurring in the complex. The process was initiated with Longmont Police Department's "Crime Watch" meeting, whereby

police command staff, line level police personnel, neighborhood resource personnel, a resident of the complex and the manager of the complex discussed present issues.

"Crime Watch" is a problem solving process that has been modeled after New York's COMPSTAT process. "Crime Watch" involves two monthly meetings in which police personnel and community members troubleshoot identified problems. The first meeting is used to identify current issues, serving primarily as a Problem Identification Meeting (Scanning and Analyzing). The second meeting is scheduled for the following Tuesday, and is the Action Plan Meeting where additional resources are assigned and a framework for response is outlined (Response).

Followin^g the "Crime Watch" meeting, The Longmont Police Department hosted a community meeting at a local church for the people living in and around the complex. Attendance was poor, only two people from the complex attended, which put a knew emphasis on the level of fear the residents had with regard to retaliation for reporting crimes to, and cooperating with, the Longmont Police Department.

In addition to the community meetings, beat officers made efforts to personally contact every apartment within the complex and conduct a face to face interview with the residents. These officers inquired about the residents' concerns and desired responses from the Longmont Police Department.

ANALYSIS

The Crime Watch meeting, the community meeting, and the face to face interviews identified the largest concerns for residents as:

- + Drug dealing/usage within the complex
- High level of gang activity within the complex
- Retaliation for cooperating with the police department
- Loud parties/loud stereos at all hours of the day and night
- The appearance of a lack of commitment from the police department.

Various facets of these issues created an environment in which residents no longer felt safe in their own homes.

The information gathered was analyzed and used to assist with formulating a plan to effectively resolve these issues permanently. The Longmont Police Department's crime analyst researched calls for service and identified the days and times with the highest level of calls for service. Community resources were identified as possible participants to resolving the identified issues. Along with other analyses, a CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) study was completed for the complex to identify areas that necessitated improvement to reduce the comfort level for the offenders.

A brief review of the previous attempts by the Longmont Police Department to improve the quality of life within this complex revealed a common theme. The primary method used was to increase police presence by having officers patrol this area in marked patrol cars more

frequently. Some efforts were made to involve the community in team building type activities, but they were not well received and/or lacked follow-up. Although this method initially appeared to be effective, after the increased police presence ceased the criminal activity quickly returned. In addition, the problem complex lacked any substantial relationship between the manager, residents, and *officers*.

After compiling the information received from all the above listed sources/meetings, additional qualitative analysis was completed. The analysis revealed underlying issues that needed to be dealt with in order to make a permanent change within the complex. Issues identified as root causes for the problems were:

- Juveniles being used as lookouts for drug dealers/users. The juveniles, as young as 10 years of age, were placed on the outskirts of the complex in locations where they would be able to see a marked police car over a block away. Once the police car was spotted, they would run and warn the dealers/users or initiate a communication system consisting of a series of whistles to alert people within the complex of the police presence. This made it virtually impossible for patrol officers to personally observe criminal activity.
- + The same communication system was used to warn gang members of approaching police when *they would* were fighting or were retaliating against residents that did call or provide information to the police.
- The layout, landscaping, and poor lighting conditions provided excellent concealment for the criminal element operating within the complex.

- A lack of commitment from the management company and the manager of the complex to follow-up with any type of eviction process or accountability applied to residents that were involved in criminal activity and charged with committing crimes.
- A lack of background screening for resident applicants.
- Due to a high volume of calls for service city-wide, officers were not able to dedicate much, if any time to proactive enforcement.
- Because of the environment created by the criminal element within the complex, the gang members and drug dealers/users believed and acted as if they were untouchable by the Longmont Police Department.

Due to low staffing levels and budget constraints, whatever plan was adopted had to be done with minimal impact on staffing and budget as was possible, yet still effective enough to make a difference.

RESPONSE

The high level of fear regarding retaliation had already been identified prior to the initial face to face contacts by beat officers. In an effort to rapidly address this concern, a flyer was made and handed out to each apartment during the face to face contact. This flyer contained a list of phone numbers to call in which persons reporting crimes/concerns could remain anonymous. This provided the residents a sense of security and control while establishing a line of communication between the residents and the police (See addendum A).

An action plan was formulated, which consisted of the five beat officers and one officer from a neighboring beat, taking a proactive roll in enforcement in and around the complex. The plan took the form of:

- A letter drafted in English and Spanish, outlining the Noise Ordinance for the City of Longmont verbatim. Examples of violations for each subsection of the city ordinance were provided (See page two of addendum B). The complex manager delivered a copy of this letter to each apartment within the complex. This letter was also incorporated into the Tenant Rental Packet provided to new residents.
- + All patrol officers were requested to take a zero tolerance stance when dealing with these types of violations within and around the complex.
- Overtime positions were posted for patrol assignments. Officers signing up for the overtime assignment handled routine calls for service, thus enabling beat officers to proactively work in a uniformed assignment, driving a marked unit, to provide an increased presence within and around the complex.
- The same overtime positions, referred to above, were also utilized to allow beat officers to work in a plain clothes capacity; driving unmarked cars provided by a local Ford dealer through a lease agreement with the city. These officers proactively patrolled the complex and surrounding area. The local Ford dealer provided used vehicles to prevent early detection by the lookouts within and around the complex. A different car was provided every week, thus preventing the ability to readily identify the vehicle once its use was discovered.

The tactic employed during this phase of the operation was to initially use the vehicle to gather intelligence information and allow officers to witness criminal activity. After the

offense was witnessed and suspects left the apartment complex, they were followed and stopped a distance away and charged accordingly. This reduced the likelihood of the car being identified as being used for enforcement action. After a couple of days of doing this, officers would then take enforcement action within the complex, and surrounding area, so the tenants, criminals, and gang members would notice the police presence in an unmarked vehicle.

This proactive police effort accomplished two things. First, it showed everyone the police were present and not readily identified. Second, it caused a level of fear for the criminal element by creating an environment where the police suddenly appeared before them, undetected, during their criminal activity. The intention was to cause the criminals to believe that police occupied every unknown vehicle in the area. At the end of the week that vehicle was returned to the Ford dealer and another used vehicle was obtained. The same tactics would then be employed with that vehicle. In addition to this, officers varied the times of day and days of the week when the marked and unmarked vehicles were deployed.

- Aggressive enforcement of minor violations occurring at and around the apartment complex was used.
- A good working relationship was developed between the beat officers and the on-site manager. However, as time past it was discovered she was more of a detriment to the project than an asset. The sharing of information that was taking place between the officers working this assignment and the on-site manager was occurring as planned. Unfortunately the on-site manager was not passing the information on to the management corporation, nor was she

taking any action on the majority of the information being provided. Towards the end of October 2001, the manager quit and was replaced by a new manager.

- A list of residents was obtained and all residents were checked for any outstanding warrants. Any warrants that were located were acted upon.
- Increased foot patrols in uniform and plain clothes were also initiated.
- The Longmont Police Department contacted the management corporation for the apartment complex and expressed several concerns regarding the apartment complex. Calls for service at the complex were also provided to educate and solicit the assistance of the corporation. This step opened the lines of communication between the Longmont Police Department and the management corporation for the complex.
- Beat officers worked in conjunction with the Special Enforcement Unit, sharing intelligence information on the criminal element.
- The Special Enforcement Unit worked simultaneously in an undercover capacity, establishing residency within the complex for an undercover officer. This was done to earn the trust of drug dealers/users with the intent to begin making purchases of narcotics. This phase of the program lasted approximately six months.

The aggressive proactive enforcement began on August 4, 2001 and lasted approximately six weeks. Although it is not at the same intensity level now, the project still continues to a lesser degree.

The arrival of the new manager brought with it many advantageous opportunities. Beat officers quickly made contact and introduced themselves. Information regarding the history of the

complex as well as what actions were recently initiated were shared with her. Regular impromptu meetings were held between the beat officers and the manager to maintain a good level of communication.

The new manager also took an active roll in the new partnership that had been developed between the police department and the complex. Some of the things that were completed because of her assistance were:

- Additional letters were provided to each apartment introducing the new manager to the residents. The letter provided a list of expectations' management had regarding the daily operations of this complex. The letter also advised residents of the close-working partnership management maintains with the police department, the city's Community Relations office, the Neighborhood Resources, and El Comite'. Attached to this letter were additional letters outlining the city noise ordinance and another letter providing contact information regarding various future issues (See addendum B).
- Another community meeting was scheduled in a neighborhood school. The meeting was attended by Longmont Community Relations personnel, beat officers, the new manager, the new maintenance technician, approximately thirty people comprised of residents living within the apartment complex as well as people living around it and employees of the local newspaper. The purpose of the meeting was to focus on communication. During the meeting, introductions were made, information was shared with attendees and expectations were again outlined along with an explanation accompanying them.

- The new manager discovered the previous manager was not complying with the rules and regulations established by the management corporation. Hence, background checks and credit checks were completed for new applicants, as well as references being contacted. Incomplete applications were no longer being accepted.
 - Residents' files were examined and brought into compliance.
 - Eviction notices were served on residents violating complex rules or charged with various crimes whether committed on the complex property or away from the complex. At one point, thirteen units were vacated as a result of evictions and residents moving from the complex.
- + Junk and abandoned vehicles were towed from the complex.

Once the management corporation personnel were informed, they actively participated in addressing identified issues. The corporation provided funding to improve the lighting conditions, trees and shrubs were trimmed to eliminate obstructions concealing persons activities, and parking lots were resurfaced.

ASSESSMENT

The success of this project has been measured in several ways. Presently there is an increase in the level of participation from the residents in policing their neighborhood. There is a decrease in the volume and severity of crime occurring in the complex. In addition, there is an improved appearance within the complex and a sense of ownership displayed by the residents. For the first time in my fourteen years of police work in Longmont, residents are decorating their apartments for various holidays (i.e. - Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Valentine's Day).

In the near future, the corporation that manages this complex will be funding the creation of a police substation within one of the apartments of this complex, to include funding major modifications to the unit. The apartment for this substation has already been identified, some modifications have been discussed and research is still continuing on this project. The substation will be centrally located within the complex, next to the manager's office, so it will be easily accessible to the community living and around the complex. The expectation is that beat officers assigned to this beat, as well as those assigned to beats surrounding this one, will utilize this substation whenever possible. It will be designed to facilitate walk in customers as well as provide a working location that is easily accessible to the community and police personnel.

One of the other important quality of life improvements resulting from this project is the increase in the number of children that are now outside playing within the complex on a regular basis. Prior to this project parents were afraid to allow their children to go outside and play.

During the six weeks, proactive enforcement was employed a total of twenty-two days. During the twenty-two days the six-officer unit made nineteen arrests, which included:

- One car^rying a concealed weapon
- Seven drug and drug paraphernalia arrests/summons'
- Six warrants
- One criminal impersonation
- Two DUI's
- One contributing to the delinquency of a minor

- One Habitual Traffic Offender
- Eleven summons' for alcohol/drugs/weapons were issued
- Four traffic summons'
- Twelve warning citations
- Handled five disturbances (1 interrupted which involved a tire iron/crowbar)
- Six loud music complaints
- Three juveniles turned over to their parents for drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana without charges due to lack of evidence and definite location of violation.

The Special Enforcement Unit's phase of this project concluded on October 29, 2001, with twelve arrest warrants obtained and executed. Of those twelve arrest warrants, nine suspects were located and arrested. Five additional suspects with outstanding arrest warrants or in possession of drugs at the time of contact were also arrested (See addendum C). Some of the evictions mentioned previously were a direct result of this activity.

During the operation the undercover officer experienced difficulty purchasing narcotics. The explanation provided by the dealer was the police were all over them and the complex was "too hot" to *keep* any narcotics on the premises.

Neighbors around the Stonehedge Place Apartment complex started to notice an improved quality of life in and around the complex. I believe this was an instrumental factor that lead to nearby residents joining the efforts of the new manager and a resident in forming the Kensington Neighborhood Group.

Most recently the Kensington Neighborhood Group competed for a \$100,000 neighborhood revitalization grant. They competed against three other neighborhood groups within the City of Longmont. This process entailed the submitting of a completed application along with various supporting documentation to a panel for review. Once the panel reviewed all submitted documentation from all neighborhood groups, they determined which group presented the strongest need, along with the clearest direction in which the grant would be applied. That group was then awarded the \$100,000 grant money.

Although the majority of efforts and results are of qualitative value, calls for service indicate initial quantitative progress has been made. Below is graph indicating the calls for service at Stonehedge Place Apartments since 1989 and projected values for 2002. If efforts show continual success, calls for service will exist at a more manageable level than previous years, enabling Longmont Police Department to continue to work with the community to further decrease the need for police intervention.

