

Crime Free Multi-Housing Program

The Rolling Meadows Police Department implemented a Crime Free Multi-Housing Program as a tool to help Apartment managers, Homeowners Associations, Businesses, and any area in the community that participated in leases or rental agreements to fight crime on their properties. The program gives power and strength to property managers/owners, and no longer allows the criminals to push good citizens out of the community.

Common Questions

Briefly describe your policing program designed to build trust in the Police Department and better engage citizens in working with the Police.

The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program (CFMH) was designed as a way to open the lines of communication between the Rolling Meadows Police and citizens within a specific community that incorporates any type of rental unit. Often times, managers or board members are not aware of a problem with a resident or lessee, and the lack of communication between the two parties can keep a community from being a safe and enjoyable place to live or work. The program begins with managers, owners, or board members attending a free seminar hosted by the Rolling Meadows Police Department. At the seminars, the attendees learn that safety on a property can be controlled to some extent by proper landscaping, educating tenants, upgrading security on individual units, encouraging active support (getting residents out into the community), and proper office procedures (background checks, and screening renters). Attendees are taught about CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design), a way to trim trees and bushes, change door locks, improve lighting, and improve a property aesthetically, to further improve its safety. Office procedures are another way attendees are taught they can make the property safe. If proper screening is performed prior to renting a unit, the owner or manager will be aware if the perspective renter has committed violent crimes in the past, or if they currently have cases pending. Eliminating the criminal element prior to renting is a strong tool for safe living.

Once the seminar is complete, attendees can decide if they would like to become certified in the program. Any property wanting certification must complete a CPTED evaluation on the property. During the survey, the Police Officer serving as the CFMH Coordinator walks with the manager/owner and discusses areas of safety concern with regards to landscaping, door and window locks, proper lighting, and office procedures. Once the survey is complete, a list of requirements is made for the manager/owner to complete prior to certification.

Once the requirements are met, the property must host a "Safety Social." The safety social is the point in which the citizens become involved in the program. During the social, food and non-alcoholic beverages are served, and valuable information is distributed to citizens, describing the program and its benefits in their community. The CFMH Coordinator, Beat Sergeant, and Beat Officers attend as well. It is imperative that citizens have a chance to meet and greet Police Officers at a less vulnerable time, rather than on a call for service. The social is a way for citizens to ask questions, relate to the officers, and learn how they can become a valuable tool in the communication process on the property. Citizens feel more comfortable learning that Police Officers are people, and share similar concerns.

Once the safety social is complete, the property is certified in the program, and is required to certify yearly with a safety social for residents/lease holders. Managers/owners will receive a weekly report of calls for service on the property, and are in constant contact with the CFMH Coordinator for problems, solutions, presentations, and community meetings. The constant

contact and support from the Police Department helps to build the trust of managers/owners, and also gains the trust of citizens. Citizens feel more comfortable working with the police once they are able to know them on a personal level, and they are readily available to help when they know it will better their community.

When was the program created and why?

The program was developed and implemented in the spring of 2012.

Why?

1. The Rolling Meadows Police Department has responded to a steadily increasing number of crimes over a five-year period from 2008 through 2012 (through 10/23/12) (Rolling Meadows Police Department computerized reporting data).
2. The population of the affected area is approximately 2,000 residents, 8.2% of the total population of the city of Rolling Meadows. The overall Hispanic population of the City of Rolling Meadows has increased from 11.2% in 1990 to 26.3% in 2010. (United States Census Bureau, 2011) It is unknown how many Hispanic residents are non-English speaking.
3. The crimes reported in the affected area in 2011 were 25.8% of the crimes reported throughout in the entire City of Rolling Meadows (Rolling Meadows Police Department computerized reporting data).
4. Community Policing is virtually non-existent in the affected area due to a language barrier, budget issues and the lack of an established police presence.
5. The Rolling Meadows Police Department currently has 49 sworn personnel, reduced from 57 since 2008, currently with only 2 sworn officers and 2 non-sworn employees fluent in the Spanish language.

Since 2008, the crimes against persons and property in the affected area have increased as reflected in the below number of reports per year: (Rolling Meadows Police Department computerized reporting data):

YEAR	NUMBER OF CRIMES REPORTED	ANNUAL PERCENTAGE INCREASE OVER PREVIOUS YEAR
2008	73	
2009	86	17.8%
2010	94	9.3%
2011	94	0.00%
2012*	119	26.6%

At the current pace, with the number of crimes reported for 2012 to date, the total number of crimes will likely exceed 140, nearly doubling the number of crimes reported since the police vacated offices in the East Park Apartments.

Rental areas needed a way to help combat problem renters, and work more effectively with the Police Department, and this program does just that.

How do you measure the program's effectiveness?

On a statistical basis, the effectiveness of the program is measured by the number of police calls for service to a specific area prior to certification, and either the decrease in those calls, or a change in the types of calls after the first year of certification. For example, an area that receives not only a high number of calls, but also receives violent, drug related, or gang related calls, will be evaluated at the end of their first full year of certification to see if the number of calls have decreased. Often times, the number may stay the same, but the area may not receive violent calls any longer, this also measures the effectiveness. On a community basis, effectiveness is also measured by citizen response at yearly safety socials. Citizens who feel the property is safer, will rent longer, and be very positive about how the program has changed their personal life. Officers will also judge the program's effectiveness by viewing the activities on the property. Properties where citizens come out of their "box" and perform daily activities (bike riding, dog walking, picnics) in common areas of the property are demonstrating their personal feelings of safety and satisfaction in the program.

How is the program funded?

The program is funded by the Police Department budget. Each year, the Officers submit a requested budget, and the money is distributed to the appropriate areas, including the new program.

What other city agencies are involved in the program? How are they involved and how is the community involved?

The program was specifically designed to be organized by the Police Department; however, there are other agencies within the City of Rolling Meadows that assist from time to time. During the seminars hosted by the Police Department, the City Administration allows the City Attorney and Community Development to present a segment on eviction law as an example. This assists the attendees in further preparing themselves for court proceedings that may take place in the event of an eviction. The Public Works Department also assists in making and installing the CFMH signs on the property once certification is complete.

The community becomes involved by encouraging managers and owners to attend seminars. Often times residents or citizens will contact the Police Department with a neighborhood concern, and learn that the CFMH program will benefit their community. Those citizens will help guide managers/owners into the direction of the program.

What are major lessons learned from the program that would be helpful for other mayors and police chiefs trying to implement the program?

The best lesson learned is to be patient. It is impossible to change communities or the opinions of citizens overnight. With time, and the building of trust among citizens, officers, and the entire

Police Department, a community can become one strong force against crime. Once the momentum of trust is built, it will continually grow.

Contact Person

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