



Deputy Barbara Reichard University Area Apartment Owners and Managers Association

Apartment owners and managers are directly involved in the lives of 40,000 residents in the University Area of Tampa. Quality of life and criminal activity taking place within their complexes are some of their greatest concerns. To address these important issues in their community, an apartment owners and managers group was formed by the University Area Community Development Corporation under the Coordinated Community Anti Crime Initiative.

After about a year of meetings, it was determined that the challenges the group faced would be best served by more direct interaction with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO). Barbara Reichard, a Hillsborough County sheriff's deputy who has worked in the University Area for almost 12 years, agreed. She saw the need for better communication between the apartment owners/managers and law enforcement to address the same concerns. Deputy Reichard initiated the first of many productive meetings and the community partnership began the HCSO directly at the helm. The meeting was standing room only. "I've been in this community for all my years working for the Sheriff's Office, but this program allowed me to actually be part of a solution," said Deputy Reichard.

The Apartment Owners and Managers Association (AOMA) continues to hold regular open forum meetings that rotate among the apartment complexes. Members reach out to tenants to engage them in becoming better informed of ways to work together to enhance the quality of life within the community. Residents are empowered to improve safety in their own neighborhood; watching out for one another and reporting crimes and suspicious activities to law enforcement.

"I believe any time we create a sense of ownership in our community, it's a huge accomplishment," said Deputy Reichard. "Having other people just as concerned as I am makes this program a success."

Keeping open lines of communication has been critical to the program's accomplishments. Deputy Reichard developed a network to send out mass emails on a regular basis featuring crime activity maps, crime alerts and notices to apartment owners of recent arrests on their properties.

When speaking to any member of the AOMA, the response is similar. The partnerships created between residents, apartment managers, businesses and law enforcement is invaluable when addressing criminal activity in a community.

About the University Area Apartment Owners and Managers Association

The AOMA was formed to bring together community stakeholders to focus on improving the quality of life for residents. The association is a collaboration among residents, apartment owners, managers, management companies and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. The association also interacts with the University Area Business Association, sharing similar concerns. The connections made through this anti-crime strategy demonstrate the overlapping links in building community efficacy to increase safety, reduce tenant mobility, and provide an affordable and improved living environment.