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International Association of  
Professional Security Consultants

**Evidence-Based Security Practices**

# **Place Management for Apartment Crime Prevention**

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**EBSP-25-02**



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Karim H. Vellani, CPP, CSC  
Chair, Evidence-Based Security Practices Committee

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### ***Note from the Authors:***

It is important to state at the outset that this article—and the research, standards, guidelines, and best practices it references—does not establish a legal standard of care. The legal *standard of care* refers to the degree of care a prudent and reasonable person would exercise under similar circumstances. Rather than defining legal obligations or prescribing what property owners and managers must do to meet legal requirements, the content in this article is intended to inform, guide, and support decision-making. Security is situational because environments vary, and each apartment community faces unique risks. *Risk* is the intersection of assets, threats, and vulnerabilities. Evidence-based decisions must therefore be tailored to the specific context. Many apartment place managers avoid experimentation to minimize short-term risk and cost, but this resistance often leads to prolonged risk exposure and ineffective measures. Place Managers must recognize that experimentation—though temporarily costly—builds long-term problem-solving capacity. Because every community is different, effective place management depends on analyzing crime patterns and developing tailored solutions. Experimentation isn't optional; it's essential.

## INTRODUCTION

Apartment communities present unique security challenges due to a combination of environmental, managerial, and sociodemographic factors. Shared common areas, poor property management—such as weak lease enforcement—and high resident turnover create both opportunities and challenges for maintaining security and mitigating crime. Easy access to communal spaces by non-residents, along with inadequate maintenance and inconsistent enforcement of rules and regulations by management and staff, can contribute to environments more conducive to crime. To mitigate these risks, traditional security measures such as video surveillance, security personnel, and access control systems are frequently employed. However, these strategies are often costly, demonstrate mixed evidence of effectiveness in reducing property crime, and generally have limited success in preventing violent crime.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these conventional security measures, many apartment communities incorporate principles of environmental design, which involve modifying physical spaces to reduce opportunities for crime. Often implemented during planning or construction phase, these design features aim to enhance natural surveillance, define territorial boundaries, and control access.<sup>2</sup> However, design alone is not sufficient. Sustained crime prevention also depends on day-to-day operational practices carried out by trained staff and managers to enhance security.<sup>3</sup> This approach is referred to as *Place Management*, which includes

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<sup>1</sup> Closed-circuit television (CCTV). (2021) *College of Policing*. Retrieved from <https://www.college.police.uk/research/crime-reduction-toolkit/cctv#:~:text=There%20is%20evidence%20that%20CCTV.interventions%2C%20such%20as%20street%20lighting>; Meredith, C., & Paquette, C. (1992). Crime prevention in high-rise rental apartments: Findings of a demonstration project. *Security Journal*, 3(3), 161–167. Retrieved [https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/129-meredith\\_paquette-crime\\_prevention\\_in\\_high-rise\\_rental.pdf](https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/129-meredith_paquette-crime_prevention_in_high-rise_rental.pdf); Piza, E. L., Welsh, B. C., Farrington, D. P., & Thomas, A. L. (2019). CCTV surveillance for crime prevention: A 40-year systematic review with meta-analysis. *Criminology & public policy*, 18(1), 135–159. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12419>; Welsh, B. C., & Farrington, D. P. (2009). Public area CCTV and crime prevention: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis. *Justice Quarterly*, 26(4), 716–745. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418820802506206>

<sup>2</sup> Cozens, P., & Love, T. (2015). A review and current status of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). *Journal of Planning Literature*, 30(4), 393–412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412215595440>; Newman, O. (1973). Defensible space: Crime prevention through urban design. *Eskistics*, 36(216), 325–332.

<sup>3</sup> Eck, J. E. (1994). *Drug markets and drug places: A case-control study of the spatial structure of illicit drug dealing*. University of Maryland, College Park; Eck, J. E. (1995). A general model of the geography of illicit retail marketplaces. *Crime and place*, 4, 67–93. Retrieved from [https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume\\_04/04-Eck.pdf](https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume_04/04-Eck.pdf); Welsh, B. C., &



strategies and actions undertaken by individuals (e.g., landlords, property managers, or designated staff) responsible for maintaining order and ensuring the smooth operation of a property.<sup>4</sup> These practices include regular monitoring, consistent enforcement of rules and regulations, and fostering community engagement. By proactively addressing risks, engaging residents, and maintaining a secure environment through daily management practices, place managers can play a pivotal role in reducing crime, mitigating the financial costs associated with crime, and enhancing resident satisfaction and well-being.

### Apartment Types

Apartment communities are organized in various ways, each with distinct characteristics, designs, and typical locations.

**Garden-style apartments**, which are low-rise buildings usually one to three stories tall, often spread across landscaped grounds featuring lawns, courtyards, and surface parking lots. These are commonly found in suburban areas and smaller cities and are characterized by outdoor stairwells, open breezeways, and minimal enclosed corridors.

**Mid-rise apartments**, typically ranging from four to seven stories, often include elevators, interior corridors, and shared amenities. They are common in both urban and suburban mixed-use developments.

**High-rise apartments**, which usually consist of eight or more stories, feature elevators, secure entries, parking garages, and rooftop decks. These buildings are most common in dense urban cores or downtown areas where vertical housing density is maximized. They sometimes include doormen and/or concierge services.

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Farrington, D. P. (2009). *Making public places safer: Surveillance and crime prevention*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Eck, J. E. (1995). A general model of the geography of illicit retail marketplaces. *Crime and place*, 4, 67–93. Retrieved from [https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume\\_04/04-Eck.pdf](https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume_04/04-Eck.pdf); Eck, J. (2010). Places and the crime triangle. *Encyclopedia of criminological theory*, 1, 281–284. Retrieved from [https://study.sagepub.com/system/files/Eck%2C\\_John\\_E.\\_-Places\\_and\\_the\\_Crime\\_Triangle.pdf](https://study.sagepub.com/system/files/Eck%2C_John_E._-Places_and_the_Crime_Triangle.pdf); Felson, M. (1995). Those who discourage crime. *Crime and place*, 4(3), 53–66. Retrieved from [https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume\\_04/03-Felson.pdf](https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume_04/03-Felson.pdf)

**Wrap or podium apartments** involve residential units built around a central parking garage (wrap) or constructed over a concrete podium. This design is often used in cities and suburbs that require higher density but still accommodate car access, offering efficient land use and centralized amenities.

**Townhome or rowhouse-style apartments** are multi-level rental units that resemble traditional townhomes, often attached in rows. They are typically found in suburban redevelopment projects or urban mixed-use neighborhoods and usually feature private entrances and sometimes small yards or patios.

**Duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes** are smaller multi-unit buildings, typically with two to four units per structure. These are common in residential neighborhoods allowing gentle density and often provide more privacy than larger communities, sometimes even being owner-occupied.

## UNDERSTANDING CRIME IN APARTMENTS

Although crime can occur in any type of housing, certain features sometimes associated with apartment communities, such as higher residential density, shared common areas, frequent resident turnover, and specific aspects of building design may contribute to conditions that elevate crime risk in certain contexts. When compared to detached single family homes, prior research has found that large apartment buildings experienced approximately 280% more violent crimes of aggravated assault and homicide, between 70% and 130% more burglaries and robberies, and about 200% more motor vehicle thefts. Similarly, but to a lesser extent, small apartment communities reported between 80% and 180% more crime for all crime types with the exception of burglary.<sup>5</sup> These findings highlight the increased risk of crime in some apartment settings, which may partly stem from the perceived opportunities for offending that certain environmental conditions create. In large multifamily communities, high resident turnover, anonymous shared spaces, and the constant flow of visitors or non-residents can make it easier for offenders to blend in unnoticed and harder for neighbors to recognize unusual behavior.

In contrast, single-family home neighborhoods tend to have more defined private spaces,<sup>6</sup> lower residential density, and stronger informal social control and collective efficacy, which can enhance natural surveillance and community guardianship, resulting in lower crime and disorder. The combination of well-defined private property, fewer shared access points, and greater social cohesion can help create an environment that is less conducive to opportunistic offending compared to larger apartment communities.

In the context of crime prevention, collective efficacy refers to the shared belief and capacity of community members to maintain social order, regulate behavior, and intervene for the common good. It combines two key elements:

- Social cohesion and trust – the extent to which residents feel connected, trust one another, and have a sense of mutual obligation.

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<sup>5</sup> Hipp, J. R., Kim, Y. A., & Kane, K. (2019). The effect of the physical environment on crime rates: Capturing housing age and housing type at varying spatial scales. *Crime & Delinquency*, 65(11), 1570–1595. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128718779569>

<sup>6</sup> Newman, O. (1973). Defensible space: Crime prevention through urban design. *Ekistics*, 36(216), 325–332.



- Willingness to intervene – the readiness of residents to step in when problems arise, whether that means discouraging disorderly conduct, addressing youth misbehavior, or collaborating to solve local safety issues.

Research by Robert Sampson and colleagues (1997) showed that neighborhoods with higher levels of collective efficacy experience lower crime rates, even when accounting for poverty and other structural disadvantages. In crime prevention practice, building collective efficacy means strengthening neighborhood networks, promoting trust, and empowering residents to act together—whether through neighborhood watches, community meetings, or informal guardianship—to reduce opportunities for crime and reinforce norms of safety.<sup>7</sup>

In apartment communities, the potential for crime is further amplified by factors such as inadequate natural surveillance and ineffective security measures. For example, the Houston Police Department's Apartment Enforcement Unit tracks per capita crime at each registered apartment community, identifying the most dangerous properties as "F.A.S.T.-eligible," which includes 138 apartment communities.<sup>8</sup> Among the most dangerous properties, Alta Vista Apartments had 284 Part 1 crimes reported in a year—an average of one major crime reported every 1.3 days.<sup>9</sup> Of the ten apartments communities studied, residents in these high-crime properties often cite violent crime as their primary concern, particularly when there is an average of more than one major crime every month. These properties often suffer not only from weak security countermeasures and inadequate management response, but also from broader issues related to poor living conditions—such as structural and electrical hazards, neglected repairs, and general property deterioration.

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, a small number of apartment communities in Houston account for a disproportionately large share of total crime, drawing attention to the importance of targeted, place-specific interventions and stronger operational strategies at these specific locations.

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<sup>7</sup> Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science*, 277(5328), 918–924. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.277.5328.918>

<sup>8</sup> Houston Police Department, Apartment Enforcement Unit, 2015-16 F.A.S.T. List; Way & Fraser. (2018). Out of order: Houston's dangerous apartment epidemic. The University of Texas School of Law Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic. Retrieved from <https://law.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/02/2018-02-ECDC-FullReport-HoustonApartments.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Part 1 Crimes, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, include both violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) and property crimes (theft, burglary, auto theft, and arson). Part 2 Crimes include "disorder crimes" such as vandalism, disorderly conduct, and gambling, among others.

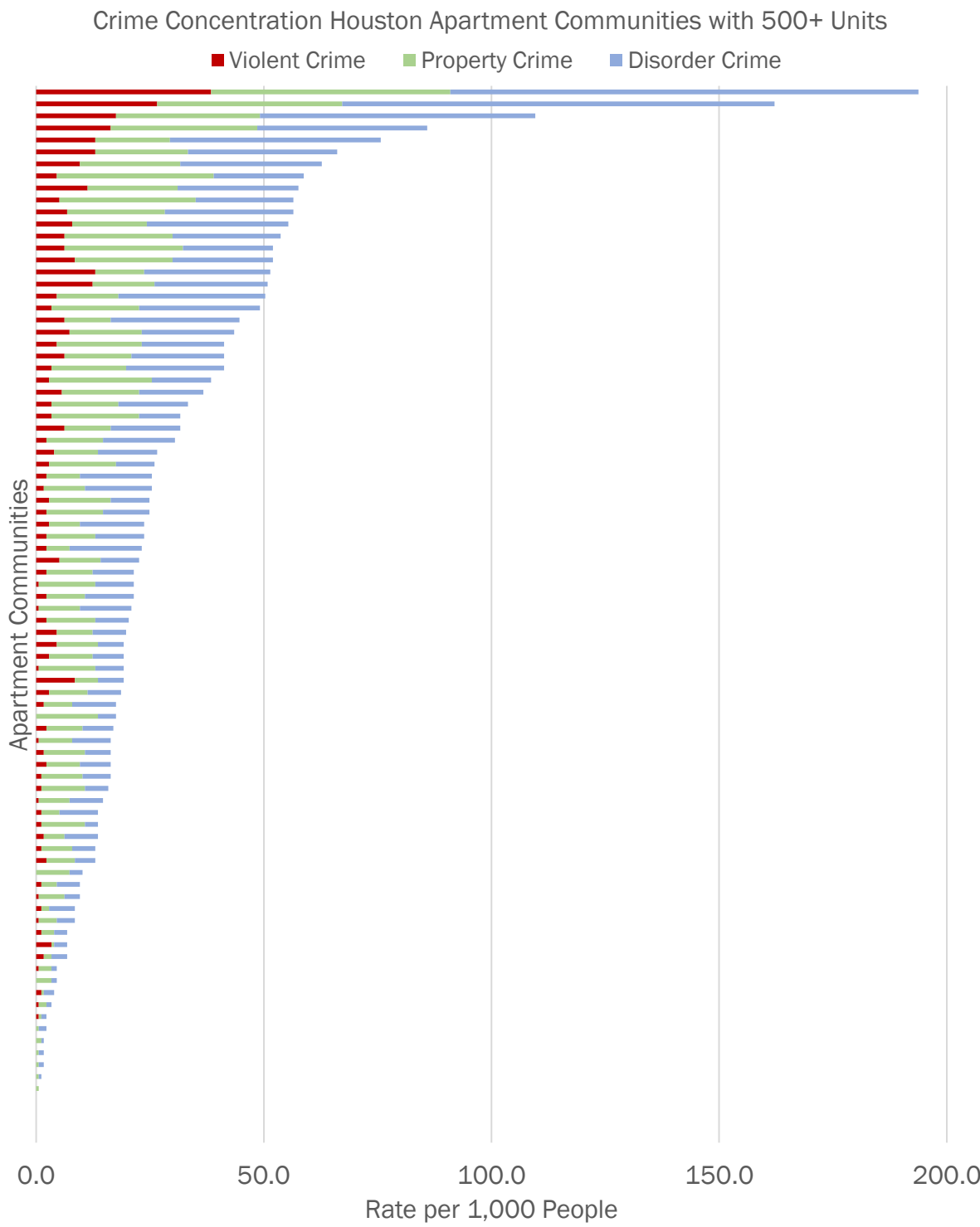


Figure 1 presents 2020 data from the Houston Police Department for Part I (violent and property) crimes and Part II (disorder) crimes by apartment community.

In line with this sentiment, research further supports the link between poor property management and higher crime rates. For instance, properties with low-end management practices—such as inadequate tenant screening, property disinvestment, and frequent eviction filings—have been shown to experience higher rates of violent crime.<sup>10</sup> Research using landlord eviction filing data as a proxy for poor screening have found that properties with housing code violations and eviction filings between 2016-2018 saw assault rates at 49% compared to 20% at properties without these issues, highlighting the correlation between poor management and crime.<sup>11</sup>

Importantly, research also suggests that when property owners are made aware of crime occurring on their properties, they may take corrective action. For example, property owners who received notices of fines for excessive police calls saw a 24% to 28% decrease in police incidents over the following two years.<sup>12</sup> This indicates that financial penalties, such as fees and fines can incentivize property owners and tenants to collaborate with law enforcement to improve security. These outcomes highlight the importance of proactive place management, collaboration with police, and private investment in reducing crime, though the association between code enforcement and specific crime types remains less clear.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to crime concerns, apartment managers and staff often face direct threats to their own safety. These threats may come from both tenants and non-residents and are frequently emotionally charged interactions—such as rent disputes, lease violations, or eviction proceedings—that can escalate into verbal or physical confrontations. Tenants facing legal consequences may respond with hostility, directing aggression toward on-site personnel. Threats may be verbal, written, or implied through intimidating behavior, contributing to an environment of fear and stress for staff members.

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<sup>10</sup> Gomory, H., & Desmond, M. (2023). Neighborhoods of last resort: How landlord strategies concentrate violent crime. *Criminology*, 61(2), 270–294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12332>; Mazerolle, L. G., Kadleck, C., & Roehl, J. (1998). Controlling drug and disorder problems: The role of place managers. *Criminology*, 36(2), 371–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1998.tb01252.x>

<sup>11</sup> Gomory, H., & Desmond, M. (2023). Neighborhoods of last resort: How landlord strategies concentrate violent crime. *Criminology*, 61(2), 270–294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12332>

<sup>12</sup> Payne, T. C. (2017). Reducing excessive police incidents: Do notices to owners work?. *Security Journal*, 30, 922–939. <https://doi.org/10.1057/sj.2015.2>

<sup>13</sup> Tillyer, M. S., Acolin, A., & Walter, R. J. (2023). Place-based improvements for public safety: Private investment, public code enforcement, and changes in crime at microplaces across six US cities. *Justice Quarterly*, 40(5), 694–724. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2022.2127843>

The risk is not limited to tenant interactions. Apartment staff may also be exposed to potentially dangerous encounters with non-tenants, including visitors, contractors, trespassers, or individuals involved in criminal activity on the premises. For example, enforcing access restrictions, addressing unauthorized occupancy, or asking someone to leave the premises can provoke an aggressive response. In some cases, disputes between tenants and their guests may escalate and draw staff members into confrontations as they attempt to de-escalate the situation or maintain order.

The physical and operational environment itself can also increase vulnerability. Apartment managers often work in publicly accessible offices and may be required to enter individual units or isolated common areas alone, including during evenings or off-hours. This increases the risk of exposure to violent or threatening behavior. In high-crime areas, staff are also more likely to encounter individuals engaged in theft, vandalism, or drug-related activity. Because apartment personnel serve as authority figures within the apartment community, they may be viewed as obstacles by those unwilling to comply with rules, making them targets for intimidation, retaliation, or violence.

### The Cost of Crime

Crime has a significant economic impact in the United States, with total aggregate costs estimated between \$4.71 and \$5.78 trillion.<sup>14</sup> These costs encompass both direct and indirect financial burdens, including those carried by victims (e.g., healthcare expenses, lost earnings, and property damage) and perpetrators (e.g., the criminal justice system costs, including jail and prison expenses). Estimated average costs for various crime types differ, with aggravated assault costing approximately \$107,000 per incident, robbery about \$42,300, vandalism \$4,900, motor vehicle theft \$10,500, and larceny/theft at approximately \$3,500.<sup>15</sup> However, quantifying the specific financial impact of crime on apartments remains challenging due to variations in crime rates, property size, and locations.

Despite these challenges, evidence indicates that crime, regardless of type, has a notable effect on apartment rent prices and property values. For instance, residential burglary, theft,

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<sup>14</sup> Anderson, D. A. (2021). The aggregate cost of crime in the United States. *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 64(4), 857–885. <https://doi.org/10.1086/715713>

<sup>15</sup> McCollister, K. E., French, M. T., & Fang, H. (2010). The cost of crime to society: New crime-specific estimates for policy and program evaluation. *Drug and alcohol dependence*, 108(1-2), 98–109. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2009.12.002>

vandalism, robbery, and assault each significantly contribute to property devaluation.<sup>16</sup> Among these, burglary has one of the most substantial negative effects, with a 1% increase in burglary resulting in a 0.21% decrease in apartment rental rates. While vandalism alone may not significantly impact property values, it contributes to decline when coupled with other offenses, suggesting that the cumulative impact of these crimes negatively affects property values.

Crime-related financial burdens often extend beyond property values, leading to increased repair costs, higher insurance premiums, legal liabilities, and reduced investment.<sup>17</sup> High-crime apartment communities may also face greater tenant turnover and vacancy rates as residents move out due to crime concerns. This, in turn, leads to a loss of rental income, especially if owners reduce rental prices to attract new tenants, further exacerbating financial instability and highlighting the need for improved security.

A recent report examining the security concerns of multi-family housing found that approximately 50% of Americans surveyed believed that the security measures in their apartment communities were ineffective in preventing crime.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, 60% reported they did not feel very safe in their apartment communities, and almost 30% indicated that their apartment community offered no security measures at all. Most notably, more than 70% of respondents felt that management should be doing more to ensure a secure living environment. These findings draw attention to the importance of security measures in shaping tenants' perceptions of security and shed light on the critical role management plays in addressing these concerns. Some of this concern may be the result of residents not understanding the totality of a security program and the effectiveness of one security measure over another.

Beyond financial costs, crime also has profound social consequences. It diminishes tenant satisfaction and fosters a pervasive sense of insecurity, making it difficult to build a cohesive

<sup>16</sup> Ceccato, V., & Wilhelmsson, M. (2011). The impact of crime on apartment prices: Evidence from Stockholm, Sweden. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 93(1), 81–103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0467.2011.00362.x>

<sup>17</sup> Multi-family security concerns in 2024. (2024). *Deep Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://www.deepsentinel.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Multi-family-Security-Report-2024-Deep-Sentinel.pdf>; Shapiro, R. J., & Hassett, K. A. (2012). *The economic benefits of reducing violent crime: A case study of 8 American cities*. Retrieved from [https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2012/06/violent\\_crime.pdf](https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2012/06/violent_crime.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Multi-family security concerns in 2024. (2024). *Deep Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://www.deepsentinel.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Multi-family-Security-Report-2024-Deep-Sentinel.pdf>

and engaged community. Research indicates that low-income public housing residents' perceptions of their neighborhood environment are positively associated with social cohesion, highlighting the role of social environments in shaping resident satisfaction and well-being.<sup>19</sup> More broadly, studies have linked social cohesion and neighborhood conditions, suggesting that environments fostering community engagement and collective efficacy can significantly enhance overall tenant quality of life.<sup>20</sup> This is particularly evident in the reduction of violent crime, where stronger social cohesion is associated with lower violent crime rates.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> De Jesus, M., Puleo, E., Shelton, R. C., & Emmons, K. M. (2010). Associations between perceived social environment and neighborhood safety: Health implications. *Health & place*, 16(5), 1007–1013. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2010.06.005>

<sup>20</sup> Baum, F. E., Ziersch, A. M., Zhang, G., & Osborne, K. (2009). Do perceived neighbourhood cohesion and safety contribute to neighbourhood differences in health? *Health & place*, 15(4), 925–934. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2009.02.013>; Sampson, R. J., & Raudenbush, S. W. (1999). Systematic social observation of public spaces: A new look at disorder in urban neighborhoods. *American journal of sociology*, 105(3), 603–651. <https://doi.org/10.1086/210356>

<sup>21</sup> Armstrong, T. A., Katz, C. M., & Schnebly, S. M. (2015). The relationship between citizen perceptions of collective efficacy and neighborhood violent crime. *Crime & Delinquency*, 61(1), 121–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128710386>



## COST OF CRIME ON APARTMENTS AND MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

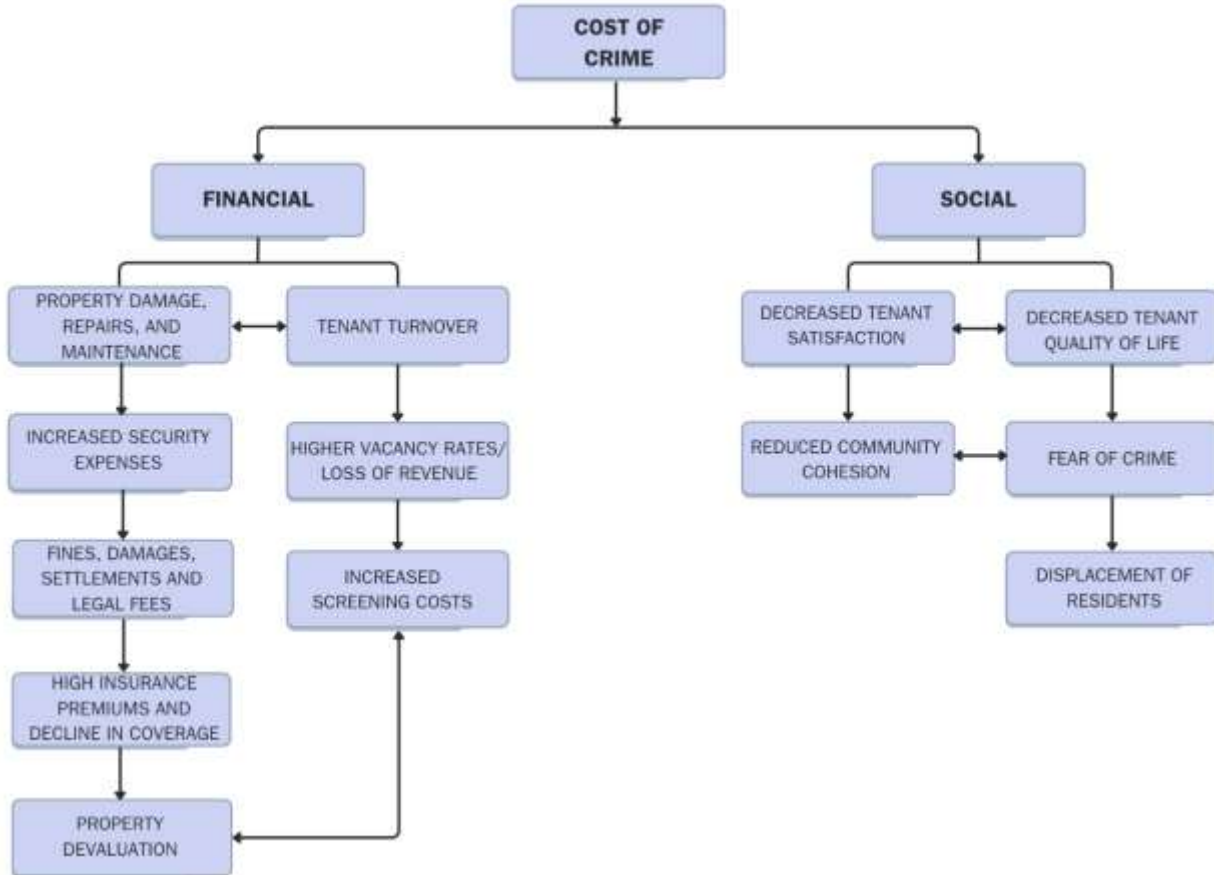


Figure 2 presents a diagram of the potential financial and social costs of crime for apartment communities.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the cost of crime extends beyond monetary impact. Neighborhood conditions and the fear of crime can deter prospective tenants, increase vacancy rates, and create long-term challenges in tenant retention and satisfaction. Furthermore, apartments affected by crime often receive poor online reviews, making it more difficult to attract renters. As many as 80% of renters use reviews during apartment searches, with more than 3 in 4 indicating that reviews are “extremely” or “very” helpful in identifying suitable places to live.<sup>22</sup> Reviews may be skewed or falsified. Nonetheless, property managers

<sup>22</sup> American Apartment Owners Association. (n.d.). *Landlord reviews to appear alongside online rental ads*. Retrieved from <https://american-apartment-owners-association.org/property-management/latest-news/landlord-reviews-to-appear-alongside-online-rental-ads/?srsltid=AfmB0orSPtjLHkk6V2s23oRiT2HiKLKMWDIRuwCvZFQgaD87AZyf4ttt>

and owners may struggle to retain responsible, long-term tenants and must allocate additional resources to attract residents and implement measures that promote security and stability. The financial and social costs of crime—from direct property damage to the long-term effects on tenant retention and community cohesion—draw attention to the need for effective security and place management strategies. By implementing proactive security measures, enhancing staff and management oversight, and fostering collective efficacy and community engagement, place managers can play a critical role in mitigating the negative effects of crime, improving tenant satisfaction, and ultimately strengthening the stability and well-being of apartment communities.

## LIMITATIONS OF COMMON SECURITY MEASURES

Apartment communities have access to a wide range of security measures; however, their effectiveness can vary significantly depending on how they are implemented and maintained. Unlike single-family homes, maintaining security in apartments presents unique challenges, as responsibility is shared among renters, property managers, staff, and owners.<sup>23</sup> To meet these challenges, apartment communities implement a variety of security measures ranging from physical and electronic security systems (e.g., lighting, reinforced doors and windows, access control systems, alarms, intercoms, and video surveillance), strategic security practices (e.g., securing outdoor areas, perimeters, garages, buildings, and individual units), and operational security measures (e.g., management policies, staff training, and enforcement procedures). Identifying both effective and ineffective security measures is essential for improving crime prevention efficacy and refining security programs to prioritize strategies that yield meaningful results. While a combination of security procedures is often most effective in reducing crime, their success may depend on proper implementation and integration with other strategies.

### Fences and Gates

Fences and gates are intended to deter unauthorized access and create a perception of security. When properly maintained and utilized, they can serve as an effective deterrent to nonresidents;<sup>24</sup> however, their effectiveness is limited. If fences and gates are damaged, left unlocked, or poorly maintained, they provide little to no security, allowing unauthorized individuals to enter freely. This requires consistent maintenance and enforcement to remain effective. The speed at which an automatic gate can close in a residential setting is also limited by safety standards to prevent property damage and injuries.<sup>25</sup> This can create an opportunity for unauthorized persons to enter the property by slipping in before the gate fully closes (this practice is known as “tailgating” or “piggybacking”). This risk can be minimized by the installation of anti-tailgating devices and good security practices by residents and staff.

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<sup>23</sup> Silva, M. A. (2021). *Protecting apartments, condominiums, and gated communities: A guide to security for homeowner’s associations and property managers*. Silva Consultants.

<sup>24</sup> Silva, M. A. (2021). *Protecting apartments, condominiums, and gated communities: A guide to security for homeowner’s associations and property managers*. Silva Consultants.

<sup>25</sup> Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Standard 325

Additionally, physical barriers are often ineffective if security issues originate from within the apartment community itself. In communities with weak tenant screening processes, ineffective management practices, or lax guest policies, offenders may already reside within the property. In these cases, maintaining strict policies—such as conducting background checks, verifying rental histories, and attracting reliable tenants—can play an important role in reducing crime, particularly in less-disadvantaged neighborhoods, where such strategies may align more effectively with existing community contexts.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, place management in more disadvantaged neighborhoods may require a multifaceted approach rather than a “one-size-fits-all” solution. Local conditions can influence how place managers operate, shaping their capacity to control crime and contributing to the concentration of high-crime properties.<sup>27</sup>

Importantly, the same level of screening should also extend to contractors and service providers who are granted unescorted access to the property, particularly access to occupied apartment units. As recommended by best practices in other high-risk sectors, service providers should undergo background checks similar to those for regular employees.<sup>28</sup> In lieu of background checks, contractors should be escorted, documented, and approved by the manager.

### Access Control

Access control mechanisms, including key fobs, PIN codes, and security personnel assigned to control access at perimeter entrances, are intended to limit entry to authorized individuals. However, like fences and gates, these systems primarily address external threats and may do little to prevent crime originating from within the apartment community.

For example, an analysis of Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data on violent crime at apartment communities from 2005 to 2022 found that 83% of violent crimes were committed by a non-

<sup>26</sup> Gilchrist, A. M., Deryol, R., Payne, T. C., & Wilcox, P. (2019). Place management in neighborhood context: An analysis of crime at apartments in Cincinnati. *Security Journal*, 32, 501–522. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-019-00177-7>

<sup>27</sup> Eck, J. E., & Madensen-Herold, T. D. (2018). Place management, guardianship, and the establishment of order. In *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime*, Volume 23 (pp. 269–307). Routledge.

<sup>28</sup> American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers. (2016). *Contractor Background Check Guide*. Retrieved from [https://www.afpm.org/sites/default/files/issue\\_resources/Contractor-Background-Check-Guide.pdf](https://www.afpm.org/sites/default/files/issue_resources/Contractor-Background-Check-Guide.pdf)

stranger (i.e., someone known to the victim).<sup>29</sup> This indicates that in most cases, offenders may already have legitimate or semi-legitimate access to the property, whether as residents, guests, or unauthorized residents. These individuals may reside on the premises without having undergone any formal screening or approval by management, such as partners, ex-partners, or family members who have not been vetted through official processes.

Within the non-stranger category, domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) are of particular concern. These cases highlight the limitations of traditional access control systems, which may effectively deter external threats but do little to mitigate risks posed by individuals already inside the community.

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<sup>29</sup> The Department of Justice (DOJ) classifies crimes by the victim's relationship to the offender. "Stranger" (also known as "*Stranger-Initiated*") is a classification applied when the victim identifies the offender as a stranger, did not see or recognize the offender, or knew the offender only by sight. Crimes involving multiple offenders are still classified as involving non-strangers if any one of the offenders was a non-stranger. This classification applies only to crimes involving direct contact between the victim and offender; no such distinction is made for thefts without contact, as victims rarely see the perpetrator.

"Non-Stranger" (also known as "*Interpersonal*") refers to an offender who is related to, well known to, or casually acquainted with the victim. As with stranger cases, if a crime involves multiple offenders and any are non-strangers, the entire group is classified as non-stranger. Like the stranger classification, this only applies to crimes involving direct contact, not theft without contact.

See also Vellani, Karim; Kaufer, Steve; & Army, Christine (2024). A Refined Violent Crime Typology: Analyzing and Solving Specific Types of Violence. ASU Center for Problem-Oriented Policing.

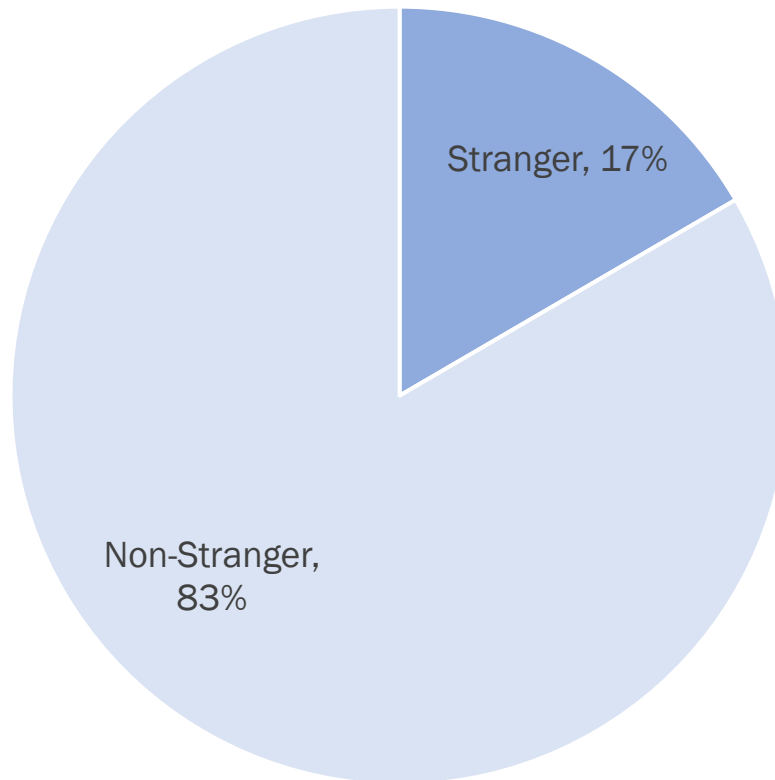
Stranger and Non-Stranger Violent Crime at Apartment Complexes,  
2005 - 2022

Figure 3 presents the percentage of stranger versus non-stranger violent crime in apartment communities.<sup>30</sup>

These incidents are especially difficult to track in crime data, as the UCR and other records management systems do not specifically categorize domestic violence. Instead, these cases are recorded under broader crime categories like assault, making it harder to analyze the context of violence (i.e., whether it occurred in the private setting of a residential unit or in a public area of the community). This limitation in crime data and analysis may then contribute to the insufficient recognition of internal security threats in apartment settings, and hinder

<sup>30</sup> Vellani, Karim H. (2021). Unraveled: An Evidence-Based Approach to Understanding and Preventing Crime. Threat Analysis Group, LLC.; Threat Analysis Group, LLC. (2024, January 5). Apartment Complex Crime Database. Threat Analysis Group, LLC.



efforts to address them appropriately. In particular, there is a risk in relying solely on physical barriers to reduce violent crime. Without complementary operational measures like rigorous tenant screening, clear guest policies, and proactive place management practices, *internal* risks like unauthorized individuals or problematic residents may go unchecked, allowing them to exploit the perceived security provided by access control systems. Reviewing police offense/incident reports for crimes at the property can greatly alleviate the limitations of raw crime data.

Although empirical research on access control in rental housing remains limited, studies on gated communities provide useful insight. For instance, gated communities have been associated with significantly lower rates of residential burglary, even after controlling sociodemographic factors and geographical location.<sup>31</sup> Specifically, gated community census blocks were associated with a 22.3% reduction in expected property crimes and a 22.7% decrease in expected violent crimes.<sup>32</sup> However, it is important to note that this study focused on single-family home neighborhoods rather than apartment communities, which may differ in layout, access patterns, and resident behavior.

The effectiveness of access control may also vary depending on throughput (e.g. the number of people entering through the access point and building design), particularly in how it supports or limits the ability to restrict unauthorized entry. Apartments with interior residential unit doors, such as high-rises or wrap-around buildings, may benefit more from access control due to shared entry points, secured lobbies, and the potential for electronic monitoring or concierge services, all of which can limit unauthorized access. In contrast, scattered-site and garden-style apartments, where units have exterior-facing doors, often rely on individual apartment unit locks as the primary means of controlling access. This makes it more difficult to maintain a uniform level of security, as protection depends heavily on resident behavior, such as locking their individual doors, and the quality of the installed hardware.

While both designs can benefit from upgraded locks and environmental design strategies, interior-access buildings generally support more effective access control because they offer layered security features which allow for greater oversight and restriction of unauthorized entry. Yet, these measures also primarily address external threats and may not adequately account for unauthorized tenants or occupants who already have internal access to specific

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<sup>31</sup> Addington, L. A., & Rennison, C. M. (2015). Keeping the barbarians outside the gate? Comparing burglary victimization in gated and non-gated communities. *Justice Quarterly*, 32(1), 168–192.

<sup>32</sup> Branic, N., & Kubrin, C. E. (2018). Gated communities and crime in the United States. In S. D. Rice & M. D. Maltz (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of environmental criminology* (pp. 405–419). Oxford University Press.

buildings or spaces, highlighting the need for complementary operational practices such as tenant screening and guest management.

### Lighting

Adequate lighting is often implemented to deter criminal activity by increasing visibility and creating the perception that an individual committing a crime is more likely to get caught. While widely used, research on its effectiveness in apartment communities is limited or insufficient.<sup>33</sup> Recent literature looking at the impact of streetlighting randomly allocated to 40 public housing developments found a 4% reduction in serious offending, as well as a decrease in arrests, suggesting improved lighting may have some deterrent effects;<sup>34</sup> however, these results apply to urban street lighting near developments rather than lighting within apartment communities.

### Security Officers

While security officers can be costly, they may play a valuable role in deterring certain crimes and assisting place managers with enforcing community rules. However, it's important for place managers to have a clear, pragmatic understanding of both the capabilities and the limitations of security officers.

In terms of cost, security contractor billing rates for security officers to end-users vary based on location, experience, and employer, and can fluctuate due to demand, market competition, and individual qualifications. Nationwide, the billing rate for an unarmed security officers is about \$28.87/hour.<sup>35</sup> It would cost an apartment community about \$505,767 annually to provide two security officers at all times. For some apartment owners that expense is

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<sup>33</sup> Meredith, C., & Paquette, C. (1992). Crime prevention in high-rise rental apartments: Findings of a demonstration project. *Security Journal*, 3(3), 161–167. Retrieved [https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/129-meredith\\_paquette-crime\\_prevention\\_in\\_high-rise\\_rental.pdf](https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/129-meredith_paquette-crime_prevention_in_high-rise_rental.pdf); Silva, M. A. (2021). *Protecting apartments, condominiums, and gated communities: A guide to security for homeowner's associations and property managers*. Silva Consultants.

<sup>34</sup> Chalfin, A., Hansen, B., Lerner, J., & Parker, L. (2022). Reducing crime through environmental design: Evidence from a randomized experiment of street lighting in New York City. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10940-020-09490-6>

<sup>35</sup> In 2024, the mean hourly wage for a Security Officer was \$20.62/hour plus a 40% mark up. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, April 2). Occupational employment and wages – May 2024 (USD-25-0451). U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/>

unsustainable. Assuming that expense was passed down to the residents via a rent increase, monthly rent would increase by approximately \$281 for each apartment unit for an apartment community with 150 units. For some residents, that rent is unsustainable.

To ensure expectations, end users—such as residents, property managers, and leasing staff—should also understand what security officers do, what they do not do, and how those functions impact crime. In apartments, security officers typically operate in *Prevention through Deterrence* mode and *Observe and Report* mode. They rarely operate in *Respond and Control* (Intervention) mode.

- **Prevention through Deterrence:** Security officers can deter certain crimes simply by their presence. They tend to be more effective against disorder and property crimes but have little to no impact on violent crime. Prior literature has identified only two studies specifically examining the effect of security officers on violent crime by way of foot and vehicle patrols. One study found no significant evidence that security officers reduced violent, property, or disorder crimes.<sup>36</sup> The other study observed an increase in violent crime following the deployment of security officers.<sup>37</sup> A substantial body of research on police officers has shown similar results with some noting that any reduction in violent crime often quickly diminishes during the treatment period.<sup>38</sup> This phenomenon is called *decay*, meaning *diminishing returns after the treatment was implemented*, or that positive effects are short-lived—typically lasting only 6–8 weeks.
- **Observe and Report:** Security officers assigned to residential properties typically operate in an *observe and report* mode. This means that when they witness rule violations or criminal activity, they notify management or the police and document their observations in written or verbal reports. Additionally, security officers assist place

<sup>36</sup> Lee, G., Hollinger, R. C., & Dabney, D. A. (1999). The relationship between crime and private security at US shopping centers. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 23, 157–177. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02887270>

<sup>37</sup> Fabbri, M., & Klick, J. (2021). The ineffectiveness of ‘observe and report’ patrols on crime. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 65, 105972. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.irle.2020.105972>

<sup>38</sup> Fabbri, M., & Klick, J. (2021). The ineffectiveness of ‘observe and report’ patrols on crime. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 65, 105972. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.irle.2020.105972>; Novak, K. J., Fox, A. M., Carr, C. M., & Spade, D. A. (2016). The efficacy of foot patrol in violent places. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 12, 465–475. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-016-9271-1>; Ratcliffe, J. H., & Sorg, E. T. (2017). *Foot patrol: Rethinking the cornerstone of policing*. Springer. 10.1007/978-3-319-65247-4; Rydberg, J., McGarrell, E. F., Norris, A., & Circo, G. (2018). A quasi-experimental synthetic control evaluation of a place-based police-directed patrol intervention on violent crime. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 14, 83–109. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-018-9324-8>

managers by enforcing community rules (e.g. noise violations, pool and playground hours, etc.) and report property damage and repairs such as inoperable light fixtures.

- **Respond and Control (Intervention):** Security officers assigned to residential properties are typically unarmed. Intervening in violent crimes or situations leading up to violence is often dangerous for them. When security officers do intervene, it is most commonly in self-defense.

### Off-Duty Police Officers

Some place managers may choose to hire off-duty police officers in place of or in addition to security officers. These officers often work a scheduled shift and are paid an hourly rate, either directly or through an outside organization. In some cases, the police officer may be offered an apartment for free or at a greatly reduced rate in exchange for their services. Often this arrangement involves the officer patrolling the property a few times a night rather than working a scheduled shift. The police officer is also usually asked to respond to incidents during the times that he or she is at home at the apartment community.

Off-duty police officers are usually armed, well-trained, and have full legal authority to make arrests. A police officer usually has more authority than a private security officer and this may serve as a greater deterrent. However, off-duty police officers typically cost two to three times the cost of private security and they may not have the ability to work a consistent schedule as their primary obligation is to their law enforcement agency. The property may also have to obtain special insurance when using police officers in an off-duty capacity.

### Video Surveillance

Video surveillance is an increasingly common security measure in apartment communities.<sup>39</sup> A 40-year systematic review of video surveillance revealed a small, but significant reduction in crime overall, indicating that surveillance may have a modest deterrent effect.<sup>40</sup> Its

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<sup>39</sup> Multi-family security concerns in 2024. (2024). *Deep Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://www.deepsentinel.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Multi-family-Security-Report-2024-Deep-Sentinel.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Closed-circuit television (CCTV). (2021) *College of Policing*. Retrieved from <https://www.college.police.uk/research/crime-reduction-toolkit/cctv#:~:text=There%20is%20evidence%20that%20CCTV,interventions%2C%20such%20as%20street%20lighting>; Piza, E. L., Welsh, B. C., Farrington, D. P., & Thomas, A. L. (2019). CCTV surveillance for crime

effectiveness, however, varies by crime type and location. Research suggests that video surveillance is more effective in reducing vehicle-related crimes and drug offenses, particularly when combined with other security measures such as improved lighting; however, there is no substantial evidence to suggest that video surveillance reduces violent crime.<sup>41</sup> These findings indicate that, while surveillance can enhance security in certain contexts, it is not a standalone solution for crime prevention in apartment communities. Furthermore, in apartment settings, camera placement presents an additional challenge, as property managers must balance the need to monitor shared spaces such as leasing offices, swimming pools, recreational rooms, and playgrounds with the importance of protecting tenant privacy.

In recent years, the use of remotely monitored surveillance systems (sometimes called remote guarding) has grown in popularity as technology has become more affordable and advanced, offering features like motion detection, facial recognition, license plate recognition, and remote access via mobile apps. When used in the right applications in apartment communities, these systems may help to detect intruders, deter loitering or vandalism, and improve response times to emerging incidents. Nonetheless, monitored surveillance must be integrated into a broader security strategy to be effective. For instance, businesses using integrated video surveillance programs have reported increases in minor crimes being documented. Yet, consistent with other research, there is little evidence these systems impact violent crime rates.<sup>42</sup> This suggests that while video surveillance facilitates police involvement and crime reporting, it does not necessarily prevent crime or reduce more serious offenses.

Furthermore, without clear protocols for responding to alerts, trained staff to interpret footage, or coordination with local law enforcement, the potential benefits of video surveillance can also be lost. When combined with good lighting, clear sightlines, community engagement, and strong place management practices, monitored video surveillance can enhance situational awareness and provide an additional layer of protection for both residents and property managers.

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prevention: A 40-year systematic review with meta-analysis. *Criminology & public policy*, 18(1), 135–159.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12419>

<sup>41</sup> Closed-circuit television (CCTV). (2021) *College of Policing*. Retrieved from  
<https://www.college.police.uk/research/crime-reduction-toolkit/cctv#:~:text=There%20is%20evidence%20that%20CCTV,interventions%2C%20such%20as%20street%20lighting.>

<sup>42</sup> Circo, G., & McGarrell, E. (2021). Estimating the impact of an integrated CCTV program on crime. *Journal of experimental criminology*, 17, 129–150. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-019-09404-y>

These findings highlight the limitations of common security measures in apartment settings, where their impact on crime prevention is often inconsistent. While physical elements like lighting, signage, and access controls can offer some deterrent effect, their effectiveness largely depends on the presence of capable guardians and strong operational procedures. A capable guardian—such as a police officer, security officer, neighbor, bystander, or even a resident—can prevent crime through presence and readiness to intervene. Therefore, rather than relying solely on physical security, apartment communities should prioritize comprehensive management strategies that regulate both residents and visitors. Effective place management, driven by well-trained staff and policy enforcement, plays a critical role in reducing crime opportunities and fostering safer living environments.

## PLACE MANAGEMENT

As outlined in the Introduction, *place management* refers to the strategies and actions undertaken by individuals (e.g., landlords, property managers, or designated staff) who are responsible for overseeing specific locations to ensure smooth operations and maintain order.<sup>43</sup> In the context of prevention (SCP), and more specifically crime prevention at apartments, place management involves activities like monitoring the property, enforcing rules, regulating access, addressing maintenance issues, and fostering a sense of community to deter crime and promote secure living environments.

SCP is a practical approach to crime control that focuses on reducing opportunities for offending by altering the immediate environments where crime occurs. Rather than addressing broad social or psychological causes, SCP focuses on making crime more difficult, riskier, or less rewarding through targeted interventions such as enhanced surveillance, access control, environmental design, and the removal of crime facilitators. It employs techniques aimed at increasing the effort required to offend, increasing the risk of detection, reducing the potential rewards, minimizing provocations, and removing excuses. This approach is grounded in rational choice and routine activity perspectives, assuming that potential offenders make decisions based on perceived opportunities and constraints.<sup>44</sup>

Place managers engaged in SCP go beyond traditional security measures by emphasizing active oversight and engagement. Place management is rooted in Routine Activity Theory, which says that crime occurs when there is (1) a motivated offender, (2) a suitable target, and (3) the absence of a capable guardian.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Eck, J. E. (1995). A general model of the geography of illicit retail marketplaces. *Crime and place*, 4, 67–93. Retrieved from [https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume\\_04/04-Eck.pdf](https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume_04/04-Eck.pdf); Eck, J. (2010). Places and the crime triangle. *Encyclopedia of criminological theory*, 1, 281–284. Retrieved from [https://study.sagepub.com/system/files/Eck%2C John E. - Places and the Crime Triangle.pdf](https://study.sagepub.com/system/files/Eck%2C%20John%20E.%20-%20Places%20and%20the%20Crime%20Triangle.pdf); Felson, M. (1995). Those who discourage crime. *Crime and place*, 4(3), 53–66. Retrieved from [https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume\\_04/03-Felson.pdf](https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/crimeprevention/volume_04/03-Felson.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Clarke, R. V. (1980). "Situational" crime prevention: Theory and practice. *British Journal of Criminology*, 20(2), 136–147.

<sup>45</sup> Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach (1979). *American Sociological Review*, 44(4), 588–608.





**Figure 4** presents the Problem Analysis Triangle which originated from Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felsen, 1979).<sup>46 47</sup>

Place managers serve as capable guardians by actively overseeing properties and ensuring adherence to security policies and practices. Their responsibilities include screening tenants, enforcing leases to promote responsible residency, and limiting unauthorized occupants. They may also monitor surveillance systems, control access points, and address vulnerabilities to enhance security. Additionally, maintaining the property and building relationships with tenants helps foster community engagement, informal social control, and social cohesion.<sup>48</sup>—all of which contribute to secure, more stable housing environments.

<sup>46</sup> Source: Adapted from Clarke & Eck (2016). Crime analysis for problem solvers in 60 small steps. Retrieved from <https://biblioteca.cejamericas.org/bitstream/handle/2015/1639/CrimeAnalysis60Steps.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Madensen, T. D., John E. Eck (2010). Places and the crime triangle. In F. T. Cullen & P. Wilcox (Eds.), Encyclopedia of criminological theory. Sage Publishers.

<sup>48</sup> Welsh, B. C., & Farrington, D. P. (2009). *Making public places safer: Surveillance and crime prevention*. Oxford University Press.

When combined with environmental design principles, place management also offers a strategic approach to integrating effective guardianship into the physical environment. Environmental design emphasizes designing and managing spaces to deter crime through increased visibility, controlled access, surveillance (both natural and formal), and a sense of community ownership.<sup>49</sup> For example, well-maintained properties with clear sightlines, adequate lighting, and secured entry points could discourage criminal activity. Place managers play a crucial role in reinforcing these strategies by ensuring they are consistently enforced and embedded into daily operations, further enhancing security and reducing risk.

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<sup>49</sup> Cozens, P. & Love, T. (2015). A review and current status of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). *Journal of Planning Literature*, 30(4), 393–412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08854122155595>

## THE ROLE OF PLACE MANAGERS IN CRIME REDUCTION

Place managers have the potential to reduce crime through four core functions essential to their role: **Organize, Regulate, Control, and Acquire** (ORCA).<sup>50</sup>

First, **organizing physical space** involves arranging and maintaining the built environment to discourage crime and promote natural surveillance. For example, improving sightlines by trimming overgrown landscaping or installing adequate lighting can help residents and staff observe shared spaces more easily, increasing informal guardianship.<sup>51</sup>

Second, **regulating conduct** refers to setting, communicating, and enforcing rules that guide how people behave within the property. This can strengthen informal social control and community bonds, especially in residential settings where people are “repeat users” who may regularly interact with neighbors and staff. Place managers can reinforce regulation by hiring on-site staff, like concierges, or by training employees to monitor and address rule violations.

Third, **controlling access** means managing who is allowed to enter or use certain parts of the property. In apartments, this includes not only physical barriers like key fobs, gates, or signage explaining guest policies, but also policy decisions, such as conducting tenant screenings and declining to rent to applicants known for repeated lease violations. Access is often limited to pools, fitness centers, and community recreation rooms.

Finally, **acquiring resources** involves securing resources such as funding, equipment, or partnerships needed to operate and support ongoing crime prevention. While this function can be context-specific, for apartment managers it might include budgeting for additional security cameras, training programs, or collaborating with local police or security consultants to address persistent problems.

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<sup>50</sup> Eck, J.E., Linning, S.J., & Herold, T.D. (2023). *Place Management*. In *Place Management and Crime* (SpringerBriefs in Criminology). Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27693-4\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27693-4_3); Madensen, T. D. (2007). *Bar management and crime: Toward a dynamic theory of place management and crime hotspots* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati). Retrieved from [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/acprod/odb\\_etd/ws/send\\_file/send?accession=ucin1180461844&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/acprod/odb_etd/ws/send_file/send?accession=ucin1180461844&disposition=inline); Madensen, T. D., & Eck, J. E. (2012). Crime places and place management. In P. Wilcox & F. T. Cullen (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of criminological theory* (pp. 554–578). Oxford University Press.

<sup>51</sup> Eck, J.E., Linning, S.J., & Herold, T.D. (2023). *Place Management*. In *Place Management and Crime* (SpringerBriefs in Criminology). Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27693-4\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27693-4_3)

Although a substantial body of research supports the effectiveness of place management in reducing crime, it is rarely subjected to rigorous evaluation.<sup>52</sup> A review of 149 evaluations on situational crime prevention found that more than 75% of evaluations reported crime reduction across various settings, including residential areas, public spaces (e.g., streets, sidewalks, or parking), retail stores, transportation (e.g., buses or trains), and recreational venues (e.g., bars or drinking establishments).<sup>53</sup> Within residential settings specifically, 39 studies examined crime prevention efforts in both apartment communities and single-family homes. Among these, place management strategies, access control measures (such as locks, window locks, single controlled entry points, and concierge services with electronic monitoring), and alarms emerged as some of the most effective approaches. Access controls and alarms proved successful in 13 out of 14 studies, and place management strategies were effective in four out of five studies reviewed. By contrast, video surveillance showed mixed results, and property marking demonstrated limited impact.

While these findings are promising, it is important to note that they are drawn from a limited and non-representative sample of place-based interventions, often combining data from both single-family dwellings and other property types. Furthermore, many of these studies relied on relatively weak evaluation methods,<sup>54</sup> which limits the strength of the conclusions that can be drawn. Nonetheless, the consistency of outcomes across well-performing strategies suggests that these interventions do matter. Together, the evidence indicates that a broad range of tailored, place-specific strategies holds potential to reduce crime when effectively implemented.

One example comes from a pilot project in high-rise buildings in Birmingham, UK, where a concierge-based security system with electronic monitoring and remote-controlled door access was implemented. This resulted in a 33% decrease in burglaries during

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<sup>52</sup> Douglas, S., & Welsh, B. C. (2020). Place managers for crime prevention: the theoretical and empirical status of a neglected situational crime prevention technique. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 22, 99–109. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41300-020-00089-4>

<sup>53</sup> Eck, J. E., & Guerette, R. (2012). Prevention: Theory, evidence, and policy. In B. C. Welsh & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of crime prevention* (pp. 354–383). New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John-Eck/publication/288349490\\_Place-Based\\_Crime\\_Prevention\\_Theory\\_Evidence\\_and\\_Policy/links/5f033c1d45851550508dcde0/Place-Based-Crime-Prevention-Theory-Evidence-and-Policy.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John-Eck/publication/288349490_Place-Based_Crime_Prevention_Theory_Evidence_and_Policy/links/5f033c1d45851550508dcde0/Place-Based-Crime-Prevention-Theory-Evidence-and-Policy.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Herold, T. D. (2024). A Place Management Approach to Promote Evidence-Based Crime Prevention. *The Oxford Handbook of Evidence-based Crime and Justice Policy*, pp.466–483.

implementation and a 39% reduction post-implementation.<sup>55</sup> However, auto-related crimes remained unaffected, likely due to the absence of video surveillance in parking areas, highlighting the importance of comprehensive security measures. Similarly, place managers engaging in collective crime control activities, including community activism, have demonstrated success in reducing drug-related issues and disorder in public spaces.<sup>56</sup> These findings suggest place managers can not only reduce crime but also positively influence the behavior of residents and visitors.

While the high-rise example demonstrates the potential for effective crime reduction through place management, such cases are often drawn from centralized apartment settings. However, apartment communities vary widely in their physical layout, and these differences present distinct challenges and opportunities for crime prevention. Although research specifically comparing these apartment types is limited, crime prevention strategies should account for how the environmental design of a community influences its security needs and procedures. For instance, fewer entry points can reduce opportunities for unauthorized access, making it easier for place managers and security personnel to monitor and control movement within the community. This, in turn, can help lower the risk of property crimes such as burglary and vandalism.

In high-rise buildings, a single controlled entrance—such as a concierge desk or electronic access system—creates a natural chokepoint that facilitates surveillance and intervention. In contrast, garden-style apartments, which often feature multiple buildings spread over a larger area, and scattered-site apartments, where units are dispersed across different locations, typically have numerous entrances and exits and often lack centralized access control. These design features increase vulnerability to crime by making it more difficult to monitor and manage access. Although more research is needed to quantify these effects in non-high-rise settings, adopting a holistic, situational approach, combined with strong place management practices, can contribute meaningfully to reducing crime.

Even with these physical and structural differences across apartment types, the role of place managers remains a critical factor in shaping security outcomes. Their ability to adapt crime prevention strategies to the unique design, risks, and operational needs of each property is

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<sup>55</sup> Farr, J., & Moynihan, P. (1994). Highgate Estate – Estate Based Management (Concierge) Initiative.” In S. Osborn (ed.), *Housing Safe Communities: An Evaluation of Recent Initiatives*. London: Safer Neighbourhoods Unit. Retrieved from [https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/67-Farr\\_and\\_Moynihan.pdf](https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/67-Farr_and_Moynihan.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> Mazerolle, L. G., Kadleck, C., & Roehl, J. (1998). Controlling drug and disorder problems: The role of place managers. *Criminology*, 36(2), 371–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1998.tb01252.x>

essential, particularly in settings where environmental limitations restrict traditional security measures.

The role of place managers is especially relevant in apartment communities, where a small percentage of properties (approximately 10%) account for a large proportion (over 50%) of reported crime.<sup>57</sup> In such settings, targeted place management strategies, particularly when accompanied by improvements in ownership or management practices, can lead to significant crime reductions. Place management is not a one-time intervention but rather a dynamic, adaptive process in which managers must continually adjust strategies over time to respond to changing conditions and capitalize on environmental features. These practices can directly influence levels of violence and disorder on a property.<sup>58</sup> Further supporting this, a recent systematic review of place managers' impact on both public and private spaces yielded promising results, highlighting their potential as an underutilized but effective situational crime prevention strategy;<sup>59</sup> however, more empirical research is needed to explore the full extent of their impact.

Translating this evidence into practice, place managers can serve as an effective form of on-site surveillance, complementing other security measures. By fostering relationships with tenants and law enforcement, they contribute to informal social control and strengthen overall security efforts. For example, prior literature examining the impact of place management on reducing crime and drug dealing on rental properties found that when law enforcement met with landlords in places that have been targets of drug enforcement, it led to a decrease in crime within six months of intervention.<sup>60</sup> Learning effective management practices can help

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<sup>57</sup> Payne, T. C. (2010). *Does changing ownership change crime? An analysis of apartment ownership and crime in Cincinnati*. University of Cincinnati. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/docview/851313210?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses>

<sup>58</sup> Eck, J. E., Madensen, T., Payne, T., Wilcox, P., Fisher, B. S., & Scherer, H. (2009). Situational crime prevention at specific locations in community context: Place and neighborhood effects. *US Department of Justice*.

<sup>59</sup> Douglas, S., & Welsh, B. C. (2022). There has to be a better way: Place managers for crime prevention in a surveillance society. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 46(1), 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2020.1788960>

<sup>60</sup> Eck, J. E., & Wartell, J. (1998). Improving the management of rental properties with drug problems: A randomized experiment. *Crime Prevention Studies*, 9(16), 1–185. Retrieved from [https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/Library/CrimePrevention/Volume\\_09/ImprovingtheManagement-3.pdf](https://live-cpop.ws.asu.edu/sites/default/files/Library/CrimePrevention/Volume_09/ImprovingtheManagement-3.pdf)



apartment managers reduce crime, particularly when they are unaware of available solutions or lack the training to manage problem-prone rental properties.<sup>61</sup>

While not always focused on crime prevention specifically, some cities have implemented landlord-oriented programs that aim to increase accountability and improve property management practices. For example, in Dallas, property owners of multi-unit rentals who wish to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program are required to register and attend a landlord briefing sponsored by Dallas County Health and Human Services.<sup>62</sup> While this briefing does not provide formal security or crime prevention training, it functions as a mandatory onboarding process to ensure owners and managers understand their responsibilities under federal and local housing regulations. This process promotes greater accountability and awareness, particularly among landlords who may be new to managing subsidized properties.

In Houston, the Blue Star Multi-Housing Program, administered by the Houston Police Department, offers an optional certification for apartment communities that meet specific crime prevention and safety standards.<sup>63</sup> It involves property manager training, a security-focused inspection based on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, and community engagement through resident-focused social events designed to promote safety awareness. It represents a proactive public safety initiative and a shared commitment between property management and law enforcement to reduce or prevent crime within the community.

Another example is the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's Crime Prevention Division, which collaborated with Clark County officials to develop and enact ordinances requiring a 2-hour, police-conducted training program focused on aspects of property management critical to preventing illegal activity on rental properties.<sup>64</sup> As part of the Crime-

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<sup>61</sup> Payne, T. C. (2010). *Does changing ownership change crime? An analysis of apartment ownership and crime in Cincinnati*. University of Cincinnati. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/docview/851313210?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses>

<sup>62</sup> Dallas County Health and Human Services. (n.d.) *Landlord/manager responsibilities*. <https://www.dallascounty.org/Assets/uploads/docs/hhs/dcha/LANDLORD%20MANAGER%20RESPONSIBILITIES-%20WEB%20VERSION.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Houston Police Department. (2025) *Blue Star Multi-Housing Program*. City of Houston. Retrieved from [https://www.houstontx.gov/police/multi\\_family/blue-form.htm](https://www.houstontx.gov/police/multi_family/blue-form.htm)

<sup>64</sup> Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department. (n.d.). *Multi-housing safety class*. Retrieved from <https://www.lvmpd.com/services/crime-prevention/multi-housing-safety-class>



Free Multi-Housing (CFMH) program, the ordinances tied business licensing to the designation of a property manager who was required to complete this training, which included environmental design and other crime prevention strategies. To further encourage compliance, targeted nuisance abatement notices were issued to properties with high volumes of police service calls, with the threat of business license revocation used to expedite compliance. The City of Dallas has implemented similar requirements at apartment communities. These types of coordinated efforts demonstrate how place management strategies can be formalized through local policy and regulation to improve accountability, enhance property oversight, and reduce crime in high-risk rental housing.

Furthermore, Oklahoma City's Safe OK Grant Program, which involved Multifamily Housing Specialists partnering with local law enforcement to improve management practices in high-crime apartment communities, included efforts such as tenant screening, lease enforcement, environmental design assessments, and coordinated nuisance abatement strategies. The program resulted in a 21.6% reduction in violent crime within the targeted areas.<sup>65</sup> Notably, just seven apartment communities accounted for over half of all apartment-based violent crimes, underscoring the importance of focusing interventions on specific high-risk properties.

These formal programs, structured interventions, and targeted training can prompt corrective action by landlords or property management, directly impacting security outcomes. In contrast, when such practices are absent or poorly implemented, negligent management can create conditions that foster crime, such as inadequate tenant screening, high eviction rates, and property neglect. One notable case involved analyzing five properties owned by a negligent landlord, who was required to implement responsible management practices as a part of a problem-oriented project undertaken by the city focused on troublesome apartment blocks—identified by calls for police service.<sup>66</sup> A subsequent change in management and the enforcement of new policies led to a significant reduction in crime, with arrests dropping from 52 prior to the management change to just 6 and 12 arrests over two consecutive 12-month periods (i.e., one and two years after).

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<sup>65</sup> Lofftus, N. (2017). Ok, O. C. S. Evaluation of the Oklahoma City Safe Ok Grant Program. Retrieved from [https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/osbi/documents/sac-documents/evaluations/Evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_Oklahoma\\_City\\_Safe\\_Oklahoma\\_Grant\\_Program\\_2017.pdf](https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/osbi/documents/sac-documents/evaluations/Evaluation_of_the_Oklahoma_City_Safe_Oklahoma_Grant_Program_2017.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Clarke, R. V., & Bichler-Robertson, G. (1998). Place managers, slumlords and crime in low rent apartment buildings. *Security Journal*, 11(1), 11–19.

*Changes in management practices included:*

1. Posting signs to announce the change in management and visiting each tenant
2. Establishing and enforcing rules of conduct
3. Conducting extensive property clean-ups, including graffiti removal
4. Allocating budgets for improved lighting, landscaping, and parking areas
5. Renovating units with new carpeting and appliances for tenants signing new leases
6. Implementing stricter access controls and limiting entry points to designated entrances
7. Extensive credit checks and screening of new, prospective tenants
8. Requiring higher security deposits for tenants with poor rental records
9. Enforcing expedited eviction processes for problematic tenants
10. Hiring carefully vetted resident managers for large buildings (16+ units)

Neighborhood characteristics may also play a role in the effectiveness of place management. In less disadvantaged neighborhoods, conducting criminal backgrounds checks was associated with lower disorder crime counts;<sup>67</sup> however, hiring security personnel only resulted in less total and violent crime in advantaged neighborhoods, whereas the opposite effect was found for more disadvantaged neighborhoods. This suggests that hiring security personnel in apartments experiencing high crime does not appear to be an effective measure in prevention specifically but rather indicates the method managers employ when managing higher crime at the property. These findings show that certain traditional security measures may be context-specific when targeting crime in apartment communities, particularly when they are experiencing higher crime rates.

Understanding the conditions under which crime occurs at an apartment community is essential for landlords and property managers when developing effective strategies to address security issues. Poor landlord practices, including weak tenant screenings, eviction filings, and housing code violations, can predict assaults at the property level.<sup>68</sup> In such cases, crime hot spots are more likely to emerge where landlords neglect their properties, creating a cycle of low-end management practices and high crime rates. Hot spots are very small areas (e.g., addresses, single street blocks, small groups of street blocks) with high levels of crime,

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<sup>67</sup> Gilchrist, A. M., Deryol, R., Payne, T. C., & Wilcox, P. (2019). Place management in neighborhood context: An analysis of crime at apartments in Cincinnati. *Security Journal*, 32, 501–522. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-019-00177-7>

<sup>68</sup> Gomory, H., & Desmond, M. (2023). Neighborhoods of last resort: How landlord strategies concentrate violent crime. *Criminology*, 61(2), 270–294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12332>

disorder, accidental injury, or any other matter requiring attention.<sup>69</sup> The small area is "hot" compared to other locations or small areas that have far less crime. Furthermore, crime is concentrated among landlords rather than among properties, highlighting the significance of violence at the ownership level, calling into question the management practices and the role ownership plays in mitigating criminal outcomes.

### Identifying and Responding to Unauthorized Residents

While access control systems and physical security measures are designed to restrict entry to authorized individuals, they can be undermined when unauthorized residents (off-lease tenants) gain ongoing access to a unit or property without formal approval or screening. These unauthorized residents may pose security risks, contribute to overcrowding, bypass background checks, and avoid accountability for lease obligations. In most apartment communities, identifying unauthorized residents often occurs by chance rather than through proactive efforts by property managers. To better address this issue, property managers could implement a combination of operational oversight, digital monitoring, and lease enforcement processes to detect and manage unauthorized occupancy more effectively.

One proactive strategy is to limit the number of common area keys and access fobs or cards to one per authorized resident. These keys and access devices should be designed to prevent unauthorized duplication, with replacements issued exclusively by property management. Guest credentials should only be issued through the management office and must be returned at the end of each visit. This approach helps restrict unauthorized distribution of access credentials and provides management with greater oversight over who is entering shared spaces. Additionally, particularly at smaller properties, maintenance staff often possess strong familiarity with resident patterns and should be encouraged to report any individuals who appear to be unauthorized or unfamiliar to management. Such staff engagement can serve as an informal yet highly effective layer of place management and security.

### Common Indicators of Unauthorized Occupancy

Several operational indicators can help identify unauthorized occupants, though some methods must be applied carefully to respect tenant privacy:

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<sup>69</sup> Telep, C. W., & Hibdon, J. (2019). *Understanding and responding to crime and disorder hot spots*. Department of Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.smart-policing.com/sites/default/files/2020-04/SPI-2019-HotSpots-v1.pdf>

### Operational Measures

- **Rent Payments:** A mismatch between the leaseholder and the individual submitting payments, especially recurring transactions from unfamiliar accounts, as this may suggest a third party is residing in the unit.
- **Work Orders:** Maintenance requests submitted by individuals not listed on the lease can signal that someone other than the authorized tenant is using the unit regularly. A new or unknown individual who is always present during maintenance visits, while not definitive proof, can suggest a more permanent, unregistered resident.
- **Staff walk-throughs & maintenance visits:** Property inspections are a legitimate way to check the occupancy of a unit and can reveal if unauthorized individuals are residing there; Noticing the same unfamiliar person repeatedly present during different times of day or week. Property managers can look for signs of extra sleeping areas being set up in spaces not intended for occupancy, like a living room.
- **Parking lot checks:** A vehicle consistently parked overnight that isn't on the lease or parking permit list can be a clue.
- **Parking pass records:** A review of issued resident and guest parking passes can uncover long-term guest vehicles or multiple unregistered vehicles consistently tied to a single unit.
- **Noise or crowding complaints:** Other residents may report increased activity, multiple people coming and going, or shared common spaces being overused.
- **Anonymous tip options:** Allow residents to report concerns confidentially, encouraging the disclosure without fear of confrontation. A resident hotline can also be useful for other aspects of security.
- **Inquire directly (but tactfully)** - A property manager can subtly ask questions about parking or traffic in the area, which might elicit a tenant's admission of a new person living there. Without accusing, a property manager can inquire about the identity of a new person, which can prompt the tenant to either reveal the truth or become defensive.
- **Occupancy policy reminders:** Sending periodic notices about lease terms and occupancy rules keeps everyone aware.

- **Lease renewal inspections:** Annual or semi-annual inspections can help confirm who is actually living there.
- **Requiring guest registration for extended stays:** Many leases require written permission for guests staying beyond a certain number of days (often 7–14).
- Managers typically **document observations over time** to avoid false accusations.
- If suspected, they can **send a compliance notice** requesting that all occupants be listed or require re-screening of new residents per the lease terms.

### Physical Measures

- **Resident app activity (software provided to residents by place managers):** Unusual patterns of app access from unknown devices or users, particularly for package pickup, amenity reservations, or communication with staff, can provide digital evidence of off-lease individuals using property systems.
- **Access control logs (RFID tag, key fob, gate code, smart lock records):** Frequent or unexplained use of gate codes or RFID tags (e.g., fobs or cards scanned to grant resident access) by unknown individuals may indicate unauthorized entry.
- **Mail/package deliveries:** Packages consistently addressed to names not listed on the lease can be another reliable sign that off-lease individuals are living in the apartment.
- **Utility usage spikes:** Higher-than-expected water/electric usage can sometimes indicate more people living there.
- **Video surveillance:** Video surveillance can provide visual evidence of unauthorized individuals entering or leaving the property. However, their effectiveness depends on the layout of the apartment community, and privacy concerns often limit their use for this purpose.

Once an unauthorized resident is identified, management should follow a clear and legally sound response protocol. First, a Lease Violation Notice should be issued, detailing the specific lease clause being violated and offering the tenant an opportunity to resolve the issue, typically by removing the unauthorized occupant or submitting them for approval and lease addition through the screening process. Management may also require the leaseholder to formally add any long-term occupants to the lease, subject to background checks and management approval. Doing so reinforces fair enforcement, preserves property security, and ensures that all occupants are subject to the same community standards and screening

requirements. If the violation continues, management may then issue a Notice to Vacate,<sup>70</sup> requiring the unauthorized occupant to leave or the leaseholder to come into compliance within a specified timeframe. Finally, for ongoing violations or serious risk scenarios, eviction proceedings may be pursued, especially when the unauthorized occupancy poses safety, legal, or liability risks to the property or other residents.

### Guest Policies

Guest policies should be clearly outlined in lease agreements. While specific terms may vary by property, a common standard allows guests to stay no more than a specific number of days within a defined timeframe (e.g. 14 days within a three-month period), unless a longer stay is pre-approved in writing by the property manager. Any guest who exceeds this limit may be considered an unauthorized tenant and lease violations should be issued. Additionally, community rules should state that frequent or repeated visits that result in heavy or excessive foot traffic to a resident's unit are not permitted.

### Apartment and Neighborhood Watch Programs

Neighborhood Watch programs—also known as Apartment Watch, Home Watch, Community Watch, or Block Watch—offer a valuable opportunity to build collective efficacy that can combine target hardening, environmental design, and place management to reduce crime in residential settings. These initiatives typically rely on collaboration between residents, property management, and local law enforcement to foster safer communities.

A meta-analysis of 12 studies evaluating Neighborhood Watch initiatives found that such programs were associated with a 16% to 26% reduction in crime, particularly in reducing burglary.<sup>71</sup> While most of the reviewed studies focused on single-family neighborhoods, similar principles can be adapted to apartment settings when tailored to their specific management structures and physical layouts.

In one example, an Apartment Watch program in Ottawa, coordinated with the local police department, resulted in an 82% reduction in break-and-enter incidents (burglaries). However, other crime types—including property damage, auto theft, assault, sexual offenses, violent

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<sup>70</sup> Legal Clarity. (2024). *Managing lease occupancy and unauthorized tenants*. Legal Clarity. <https://legalclarity.org/managing-lease-occupancy-and-unauthorized-tenants/>

<sup>71</sup> Bennett, T., Holloway, K., & Farrington, D. (2008). The effectiveness of neighborhood watch. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 4(1), 1–46. <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2008.18>



offenses, and domestic disputes—remained largely unaffected.<sup>72</sup> The drop in break-and-enters was credited to both tenant involvement and management-led security upgrades, which included:

- Installing 1-inch deadbolt locks and wide-angle door viewers
- Reinforcing door frames and lobby locking mechanisms
- Removing apartment numbers from lobby directories to prevent targeting of vacant units
- Adding deadbolts to balcony doors and upgrading latches on lower-floor windows
- Improving exterior lighting and trimming landscaping near windows
- Posting anti-soliciting signs in lobbies
- Modifying laundry room doors to prevent them from being locked from the inside (to deter muggings and sexual assaults)
- Reducing garage door timer delays by 30 seconds, adding prosecution warning signs, and installing key-activated garage switches

Although only a small percentage of participating households engaged in active watch behaviors, such as watching neighbors' units while they were away (12%), staying alert to unfamiliar people (16%), and attending resident safety meetings (11%), these behaviors contributed to natural surveillance, informal social control, and a greater sense of shared responsibility among residents. From a practical standpoint, Neighborhood Watch principles can be adapted to apartment communities. Property management can designate building captains to help coordinate safety efforts, facilitate communication between residents and police, and organize community engagement. Additional practices may include resident patrols, routine property inspections, safety briefings, and joint crime reporting protocols—all of which help promote mutual vigilance and environmental upkeep.

While community-driven practices are important for fostering resident involvement, the role of property management remains equally critical in preventing crime in apartment settings. Although direct research on place managers' impact in apartments is limited, both theoretical

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<sup>72</sup> Meredith, C., & Paquette, C. (1992). Crime prevention in high-rise rental apartments: Findings of a demonstration project. *Security Journal*, 3(3), 161–167. Retrieved from [https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/129-meredith\\_paquette-crime\\_prevention\\_in\\_high-rise\\_rental.pdf](https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/129-meredith_paquette-crime_prevention_in_high-rise_rental.pdf)



frameworks and available evidence indicate that effective place management can significantly reduce crime. A recent review identified place managers as a promising yet underutilized crime prevention strategy,<sup>73</sup> though further empirical research is needed, particularly in the context of apartment communities. One approach to advancing this research is tracking changes in crime rates when new management takes over or when current management implements stricter place management strategies, such as improving surveillance, tenant screenings, lease enforcement, and regulating access. Additionally, the effectiveness of place managers may depend on how they perceive their role in crime prevention. Research would benefit from exploring management practices that emphasize this role and how place managers implement strategies to reduce criminal outcomes. This paper contributes to the literature by presenting two case studies that demonstrate the potential of place management in crime prevention.

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<sup>73</sup> Douglas, S., & Welsh, B. C. (2020). Place managers for crime prevention: the theoretical and empirical status of a neglected situational crime prevention technique. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 22, 99–109. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41300-020-00089-4>

## REAL WORLD APPLICATIONS OF PLACE MANAGEMENT: CASE STUDY REVIEW

To better understand the role of place management in crime prevention within apartment communities, this section examines two case studies that implemented targeted management strategies, using offense data and incident reports from the Houston Police Department.<sup>74</sup> In both instances, the property manager was contacted and agreed to phone calls to discuss changes made to the property. While these cases rely on descriptive statistics, they provide valuable insights into the practical application of place management principles and how implementing new strategies may have led to a reduction of crime in years following. By examining these real-world examples, researchers and stakeholders can gain insights into how property management practices may influence crime rates, enhance resident security, and contribute to more secure living environments.

### Case Study 1: Apartment Community A in the Dallas Area

Apartment Community A, located in the Pleasant Grove area of Dallas, TX, consists of ten apartment buildings with 144 units spread across 5.5 acres. In 2015, the community experienced significant violent crime, including robbery, aggravated assault, and murder. In that year alone, 14 violent crimes involving strangers were reported, with most incidents (79%) occurring in the parking lot, followed by outdoor areas (14%) and breezeways (7%). Additionally, 13 burglaries were reported, highlighting ongoing security concerns and a poor, living environment.

In February 2016, new management took over and implemented various operational security strategies to address both violent crime and burglaries. Notably, few modifications were made to the physical security of common areas, no changes were made to residential units, and no change was made to the existing security force (off-duty police officers). A summary of these operational and physical security measures is provided in **Table 1**.

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<sup>74</sup> K. Vellani, personal communication, April 9, 2020; K. Vellani, personal communication, October 9, 2024

**Table 1. Security Measures for Apartment Community A Implemented by New Management**

| Operational Security Measures                                                                                                                                                  |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| The property management company was a member of both the Texas Apartment Association (TAA) and the Dallas Apartment Association, <sup>75</sup> and attended TAA meetings       |  |
| Implemented community policies and rules                                                                                                                                       |  |
| Property manager attended crime prevention meetings hosted by Dallas Police Department (DPD)                                                                                   |  |
| Staff held weekly meetings every Monday to discuss safety and security to address any issues                                                                                   |  |
| Monthly on-site crime prevention meetings were held for residents to encourage community involvement                                                                           |  |
| An Employee Handbook was provided, outlining security requirements for staff                                                                                                   |  |
| Prospective residents were subject to a criminal background investigation before leasing                                                                                       |  |
| Leases included crime-free and drug-free addendums and enforced a zero-tolerance policy for loitering                                                                          |  |
| Guest policy enforced: Guests were allowed to stay up to three consecutive days and were required to register their vehicles every 24 hours to identify unauthorized occupants |  |
| A 10PM curfew was implemented—violations were considered lease violations                                                                                                      |  |
| A Trespass affidavit was on file with the City of Dallas and displayed on site, allowing DPD to enforce trespass laws on private property                                      |  |
| Non-renewal evictions were issued to residents who had unauthorized tenants (i.e., off-lease tenants)                                                                          |  |
| A Crime Watch program was established with resident building captains to increase collective efficacy                                                                          |  |
| Unauthorized residents were monitored through maintenance inspections, unit inspections, resident parking stickers, and nightly towing of unauthorized vehicles                |  |
| Crime prevention notices were sent to residents regarding non-domestic crimes, including safety tips                                                                           |  |
| Security Personnel                                                                                                                                                             |  |
| Three off-duty law enforcement officers were employed to conduct foot and vehicle patrols, inspect vacant units, report inoperable lights, and enforce community rules         |  |
| Physical Security Measures                                                                                                                                                     |  |
| Vehicular gates were required to remain open (ordered by Dallas Fire & Rescue)                                                                                                 |  |
| Security signage was installed (e.g., no trespassing, no loitering, lock/take/hide, and video surveillance notice)                                                             |  |

<sup>75</sup> The Texas Apartment Association (TAA) is a nonprofit trade organization that advocates for, educates, and connects professionals in the Texas rental housing industry. Retrieved from <https://www.taa.org/>

Upgraded common lighting areas (wall pack, carport LED lighting, and breezeway lighting) that were routinely checked by the Lead Maintenance Technician

Video surveillance system

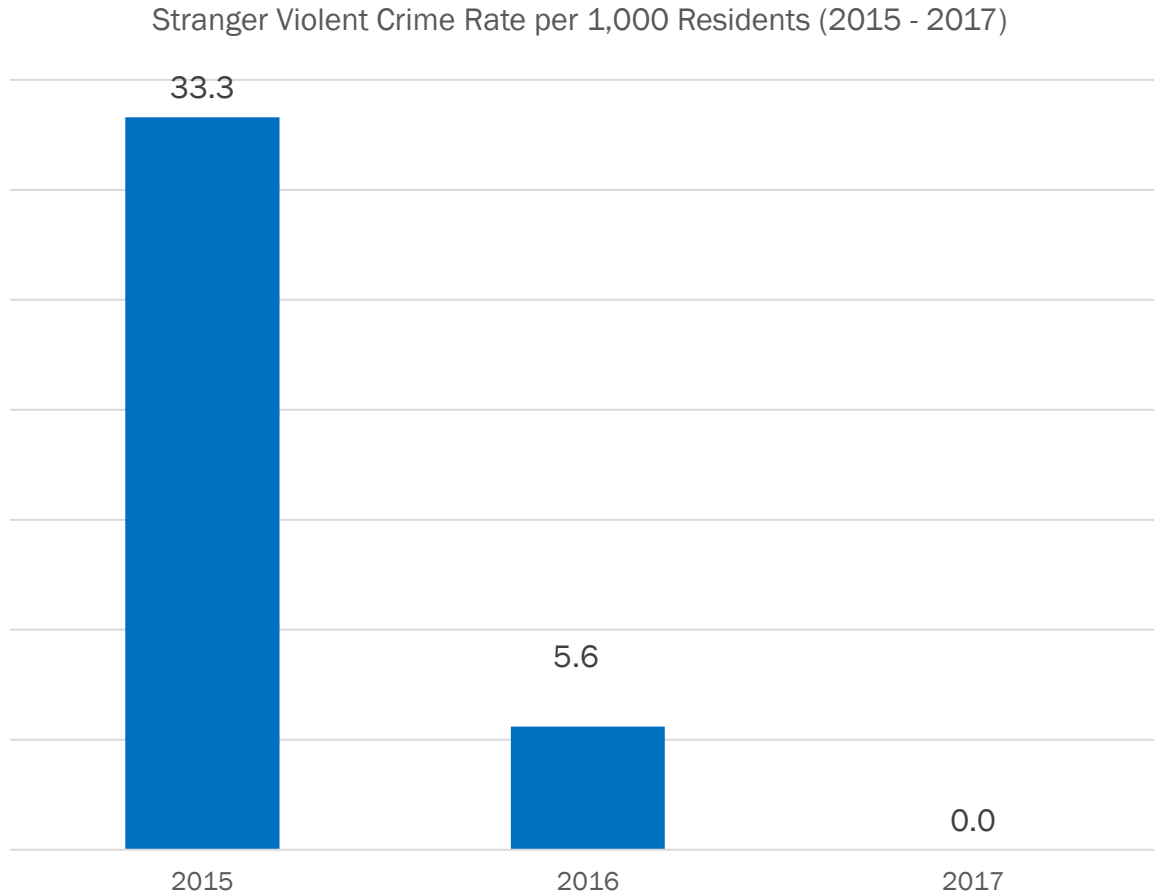
**Note: Video surveillance system and security personal were already present before new management took over. Gates were required to be left open due to city regulations, thus rendering them less effective in crime prevention.**

Following the implementation of operational security changes made by new management, stranger violent crime at Apartment Community A decreased by 83% from 2015 to 2016 followed and dropped to zero incidents by 2017. This sharp decline could suggest that stronger place management practices, including stricter leasing policies and tighter control over guests and unauthorized occupants, played a role in reducing violent crime.

While decreases in violent crime were observed following management changes, it is important to interpret these reductions in the context of the population affected. Crime rates offer a standardized way to measure crime frequency by accounting for population size or number of housing units, making comparisons over time and across properties more meaningful. A crime rate is the ratio of crimes to the population in an area, typically expressed per 1,000 people annually. This measure of crime frequency provides context to absolute crime levels, indicating the number of crimes per target over time. Crime rates offer an objective, scientifically valid way to assess crime risk and understand the criminogenic nature of specific places and areas.

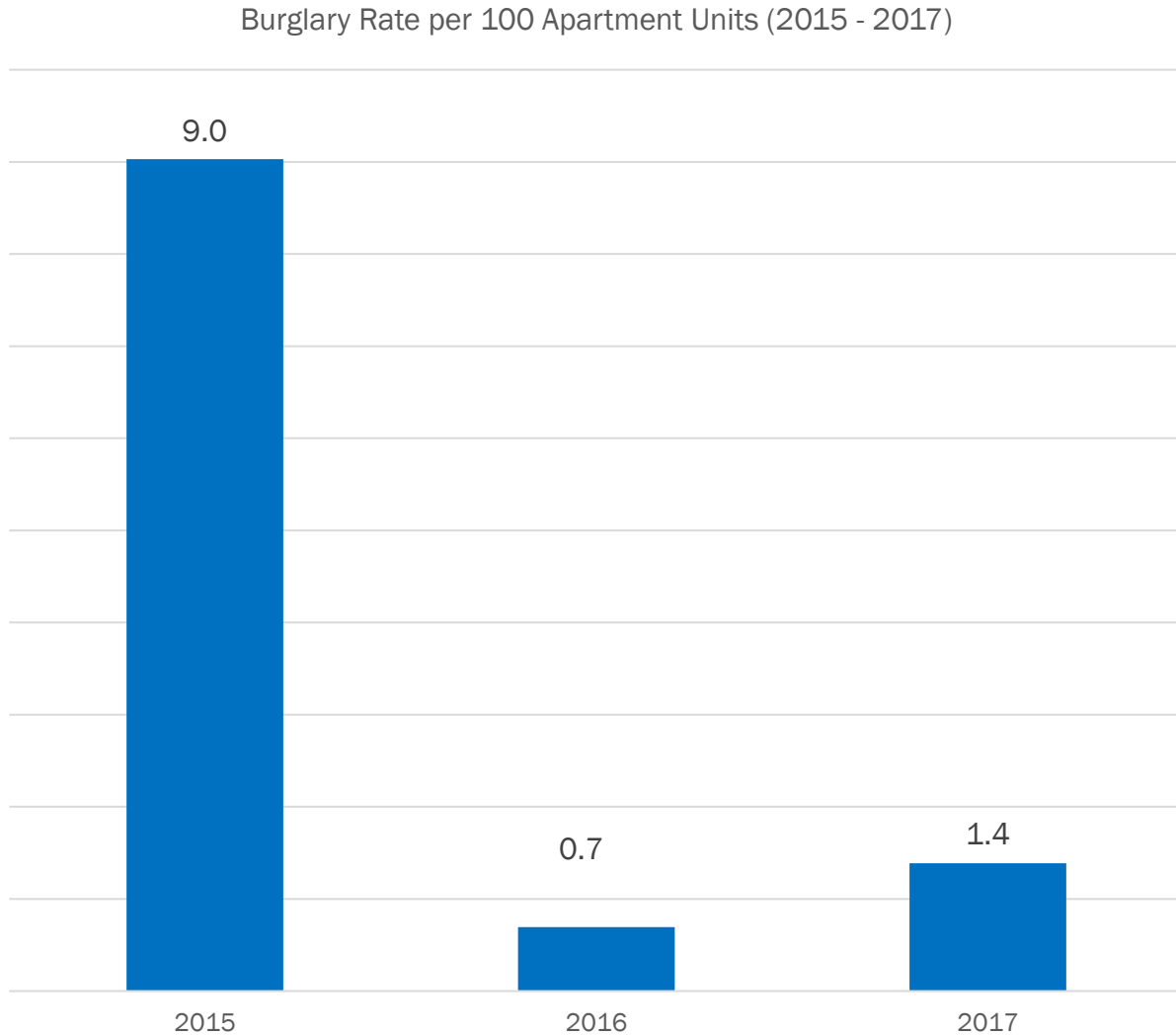
The formula for calculating a violent crime rate is  $\text{Violent Crime Rate} = (\text{Total Violent Crime} / \text{Population}) \times 1,000$ . In the multifamily housing industry, 2.5 people per apartment unit is commonly used to calculate the population of the property. Burglary crime rates were calculated using the number of units as the denominator. The formula for calculating a burglary rate is  $\text{Burglary Rate} = (\text{Burglaries} / \text{Units}) \times 100$ .<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Vellani, K. H. (2021). *Unraveled: An Evidence-Based Approach to Understanding and Preventing Crime*. Threat Analysis Group, LLC.



**Figure 5** presents the stranger violent crime rate reported from 2015 to 2017. These data illustrate the changes in crime before and after new management took over and implemented significant policy changes and enforcement measures at Apartment Community A.

Similar trends were observed in burglary rates at Apartment Community A. Burglaries declined from 13 in 2015 to 1 in 2016 and 2 in 2017, indicating a large reduction in crime following management changes. Notably, these improvements in security occurred despite no change in security personnel and minimal physical security changes, with none made to residential units.



**Figure 6** presents the burglary rate from 2015 to 2017. These data highlight the changes in crime before and after new management took over and implemented significant policy changes and enforcement measures at Apartment Community A.

### Case Study 2: Apartment Community B in the Houston Area

Similar to Apartment Community A, Apartment Community B, located in Houston, TX, saw a continued decline in stranger violent crime following a change in management when the property was sold in 2018. Prior to the sale, the violent crime rate at the community was 9.5 per 1,000 residents. To mitigate risks, Apartment Community B implemented a comprehensive operational security program that included governance measures (e.g., policies, training, and protocols). No change was made to the existing security personnel and

physical security upgrades were limited to an LED lighting conversion. New management made several key changes to governance. Specifically, they introduced new leasing and guest policies, developed an online portal for residents to access crime-related communications, and enhanced tenant screening processes. A full overview of the operational, security, and physical security measures implemented or continued by the new security program at Apartment Community B are presented in Table 2.

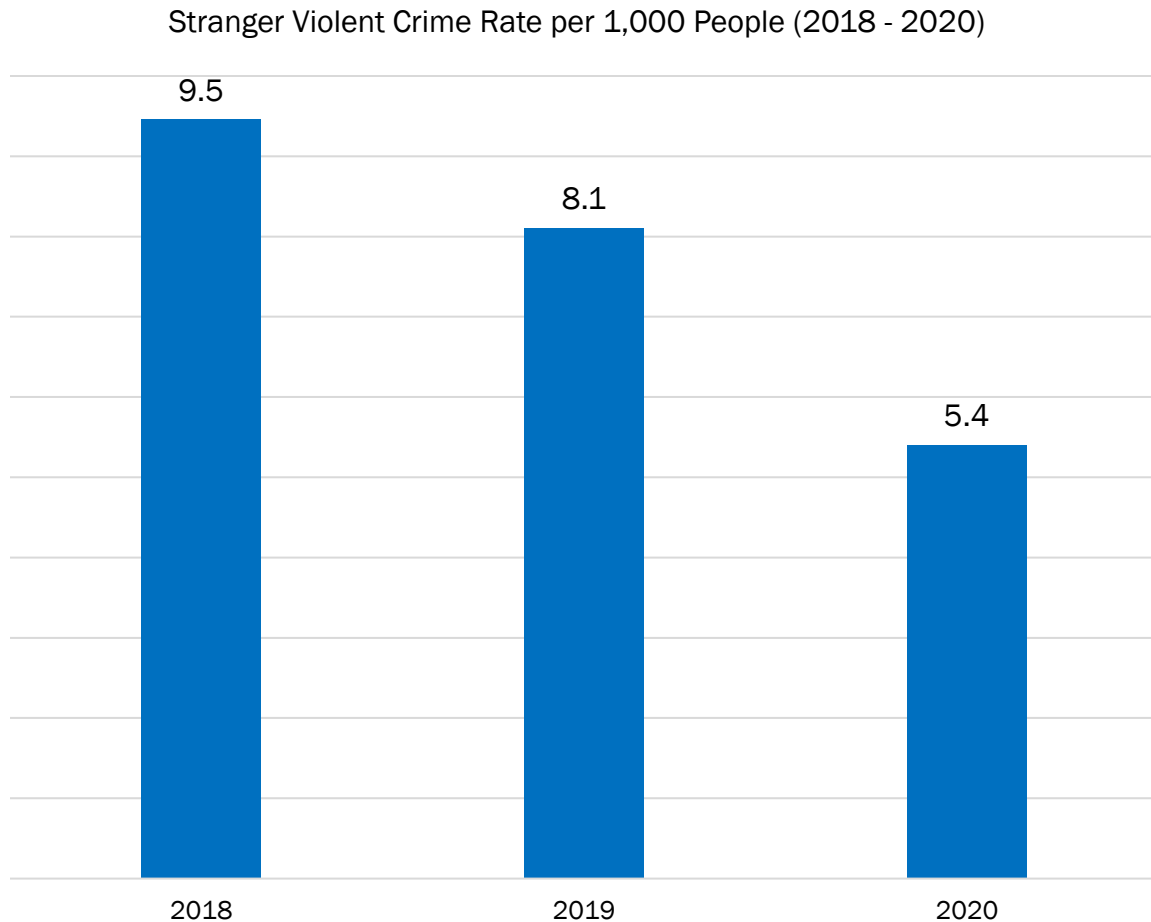
**Table 2. Security Measures for Apartment Community B Implemented by New Management**

| Operational Security Measures                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lease violations and non-renewals were issued to residents with unauthorized occupants                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| The guest policy was enforced, allowing guests to stay up to three consecutive days                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Vacant units were inspected frequently to ensure no unauthorized access                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Background checks were conducted on prospective residents, with those having felonies or suspicious misdemeanors related to narcotics convictions being prohibited                                                                                                                   |
| Management and maintenance staff conducted daily property walks                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| A trespass affidavit was on file with the City of Houston, enabling the Houston Police Department (HPD) to enforce trespass laws on private property <sup>77</sup>                                                                                                                   |
| Short-term rentals, including those through Airbnb, were prohibited                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Residents had access to a tenant portal for communication about crime incidents and other matters                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Security Personnel                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Security contractors included two armed and uniformed security officers who conducted foot patrols every 30 minutes                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Physical Security Measures                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| The property was fenced using both iron and wood materials, with pedestrian gates secured by a code                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Six vehicular gates were accessible by code for residents and guests                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| The property was upgraded to LED lighting, including wall packs, and pole-mounted lights, routinely checked by maintenance staff                                                                                                                                                     |
| Resident apartments had both keyed and keyless deadbolts and door viewers (i.e., peepholes)                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Note: A video surveillance system was already present on the property prior to new management. It is unclear whether the vehicular gates were operational as of April 2021. The changes to security measures primarily focused on operational security and lighting upgrades.</b> |

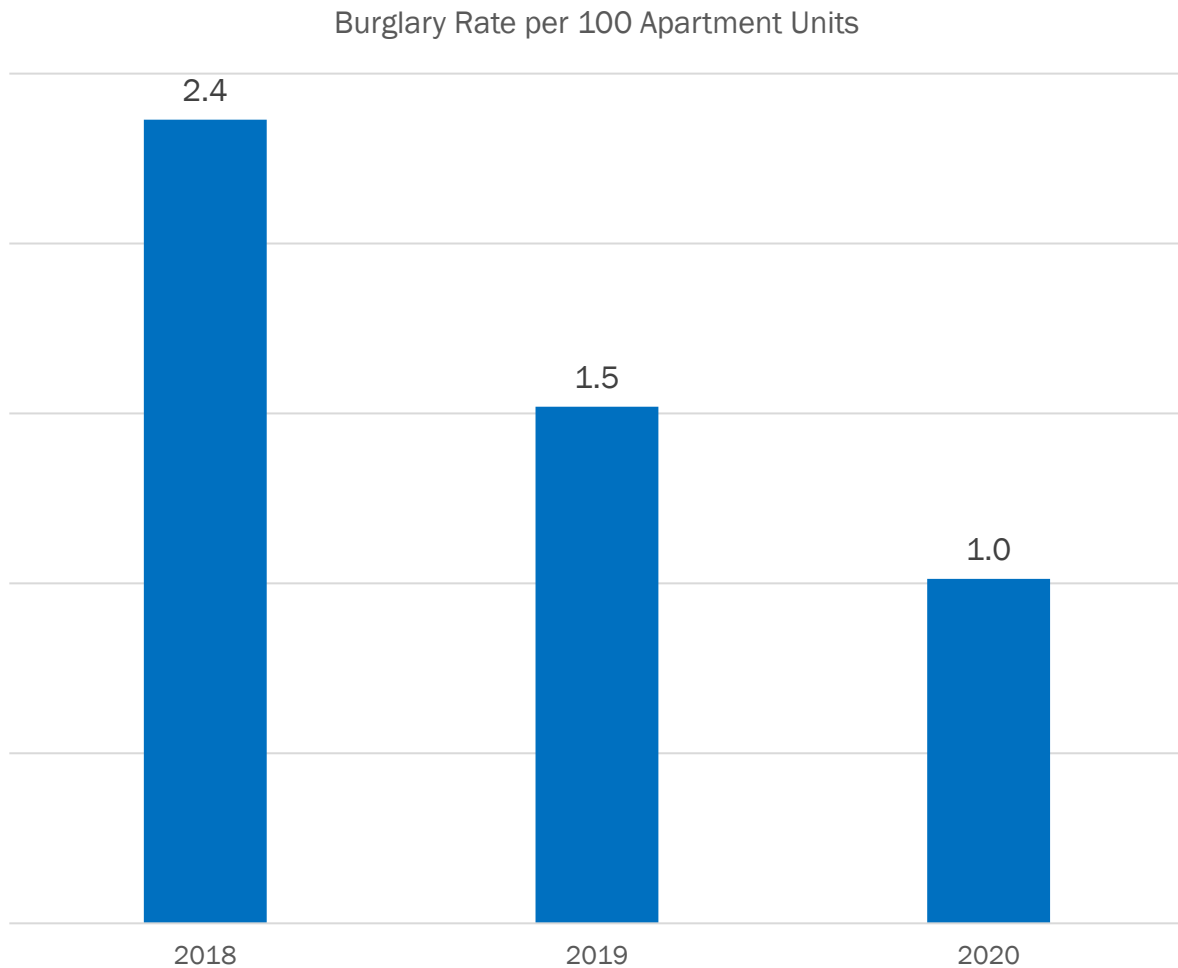
<sup>77</sup> City of Houston Police Department. (n.d.) Trespass affidavit (residential). Houston Police Department. Retrieved from [https://www.houstontx.gov/police/multi\\_family/images/TrespassAffidavitRes.pdf](https://www.houstontx.gov/police/multi_family/images/TrespassAffidavitRes.pdf)



After new management took over in 2019, operational policy changes led to a gradual decline in crime. The enforcement of stricter leasing policies, improved tenant screening, and regular property inspections by place managers contributed to a reduction in stranger violent crime. At Apartment Community B, the rate dropped by over 40%, from 9.5 per 1,000 to 5.4 per 1,000 by 2020.



**Figure 7** presents the stranger violent crime rates reported from 2018 through 2020. These data illustrate changes in crime rates before and after the implementation of management policy changes and enhanced security measures at Apartment Community B.



**Figure 8** presents the burglary rate from 2018 to 2020. These data highlight changes in crime before and after new management assumed control and implemented significant policy changes and enforcement measures at Apartment Community B.

The violent crime and burglary rates at both communities suggest that any potential impact of security measures may not be immediately observable in the descriptive data. In other words, it can take up to two years for security measures to produce a noticeable and sustainable reduction in crime.

## STAFF TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR EFFECTIVE PLACE MANAGEMENT

### *Reminder from the Authors:*

The recommendations provided below are not industry standards and do not establish a legal standard of care for apartment communities or property managers. They are offered solely as potential strategies, the effectiveness of which may vary depending on the circumstances of each property. Place managers are encouraged to test these approaches, evaluate the results, and adopt practices suited to their specific needs.

Place managers play a crucial role in crime prevention within their properties.<sup>78</sup> Effective place management relies not only on policies and strategies but also on the training and education of staff responsible for enforcing them. Well-trained staff are essential in organizing physical space, regulating conduct, controlling access, and acquiring resources—all critical components of crime prevention. While empirical evidence on the role of place managers in apartments is limited, the following recommendations, informed by existing literature, theoretical support, and case study findings, highlight management practices that may lead to crime reduction. These insights provide evidence-based strategies to address research gaps and improve understanding of crime in apartment communities. Based on these considerations, we present recommendations for enhancing security in apartment communities.

### Recommendations

**Implement Comprehensive Tenant Screening.** Place managers should adopt a thorough tenant screening process that includes criminal background checks, with attention to felony convictions, drug-related offenses, sex crimes, and domestic violence. While these checks are a valuable tool for enhancing security, decisions about rental eligibility should be context specific. They should consider the nature of the offense, the time that has passed, the location of the property, and must comply with all applicable laws.

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<sup>78</sup> Eck, J. E., & Guerette, R. (2012). Prevention: Theory, evidence, and policy. In B. C. Welsh & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of crime prevention* (pp. 354–383). New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John-Eck/publication/288349490\\_Place-Based\\_Crime\\_Prevention\\_Theory\\_Evidence\\_and\\_Policy/links/5f033c1d45851550508dcde0/Place-Based-Crime-Prevention-Theory-Evidence-and-Policy.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John-Eck/publication/288349490_Place-Based_Crime_Prevention_Theory_Evidence_and_Policy/links/5f033c1d45851550508dcde0/Place-Based-Crime-Prevention-Theory-Evidence-and-Policy.pdf)

Careful tenant screening practices can significantly reduce the likelihood of crime in residential communities.<sup>79</sup> This approach was also a key place management strategy adopted in the case studies presented. By selecting tenants thoughtfully and fairly, place managers can mitigate security risks and foster a more secure living environment. Screening tenants for criminal backgrounds helps prevent high-risk individuals from living on the property, thereby reducing the likelihood of criminal activity, especially in communities already experiencing crime.

**Screen Employees and Contractors.** All employees should undergo a pre-employment criminal background check comparable to the screening process used for prospective tenants. Similarly, all vendors or contractors granted unescorted access to the property should also be required to complete a background check prior to performing work on site.

**Enforce Lease Agreements and Regulate Unauthorized Residents.** To maintain a secure living environment, place managers must actively enforce lease agreements by monitoring tenant compliance, particularly regarding unauthorized occupants or activities that pose security risks. Issuing non-renewals or eviction notices for lease violations,<sup>80</sup> such as allowing unauthorized individuals to reside on the property, helps management maintain control and ensure a more secure community.

Case studies of Apartment Community A and B demonstrate the practical application of strict lease enforcement strategies. Both properties adopted measures to limit guest stays and reinforce compliance. At Apartment Community A, management also required guest vehicle registration, which helped identify unauthorized residents and improve oversight.

While gated entryways can deter external threats, they do not address individuals already living on-site without approval. To mitigate this risk, property managers must take proactive steps to remove unauthorized occupants who have not undergone a background screening. In both case studies, residents found with off-lease tenants faced lease non-renewal, highlighting the role of consistent enforcement in crime prevention.

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<sup>79</sup> Gilchrist, A. M., Deryol, R., Payne, T. C., & Wilcox, P. (2019). Place management in neighborhood context: An analysis of crime at apartments in Cincinnati. *Security Journal*, 32, 501–522.

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-019-00177-7>; Gomory, H., & Desmond, M. (2023). Neighborhoods of last resort: How landlord strategies concentrate violent crime. *Criminology*, 61(2), 270–294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12332>

<sup>80</sup> Clarke, R. V., & Bichler-Robertson, G. (1998). Place managers, slumlords and crime in low rent apartment buildings. *Security Journal*, 11(1), 11–19.

**Manage Daily Operational Procedures.** Property managers and staff should implement regular maintenance checks and daily property inspections to ensure both security and operational efficiency. Routine walk-throughs allow staff to build relationships with residents and identify unauthorized tenants. These inspections also help detect maintenance issues, such as faulty lights or broken gates, that might otherwise go unnoticed, reducing security vulnerabilities. Property managers and/or maintenance staff should also inspect vacant units routinely for unauthorized access, squatters, property damage, appliance theft, and other security issues.

**Train Staff on Crime Prevention.** To enhance the effectiveness of place management in reducing crime, apartment communities should consider investing in targeted training and ongoing professional development for staff. Essential training topics include conducting thorough property inspections, monitoring unauthorized access, enforcing guest policies, securing both occupied and vacant units, and effectively using physical security features. Incorporating SCP principles into training ensures a proactive and comprehensive approach to crime reduction. Additionally, staff must also be trained to safely engage with suspicious individuals or trespassers to minimize injury risk and reduce liability.

Despite the importance of these security-focused skills, most existing property management programs currently lack comprehensive instruction in crime prevention and physical security. This gap presents a significant opportunity for the private sector and industry groups to develop specialized training tailored to apartment communities' unique needs.

Furthermore, to maintain effectiveness, apartment communities should prioritize ongoing professional development through regular workshops and training sessions. These sessions can reinforce crime prevention strategies, introduce emerging technologies, and update staff on evolving legal requirements and best practices. Partnerships with local, state, or national organizations and security experts can enhance the relevance and quality of training programs. Although these training approaches are not yet widespread, they offer promising foundations for communities willing to explore, evaluate, and adapt place management strategies to their specific contexts.

**Collaborate with Security Experts and Emergency Preparedness.** While not currently the standard practice in most apartment communities, some properties may benefit from exploring partnerships with security experts to assess vulnerabilities and integrate evidence-based security practices tailored to individual apartment community needs. Additionally, staff should receive training on how to respond to security incidents and emergencies, including when and how to contact authorities, manage distress calls from residents, and respond to critical incidents such as fires, home invasions, natural disasters, or community disturbances.

These emergency response skills complement ongoing training in crime prevention and security procedures.

Another concept worth exploring, particularly in high-risk properties, is the use of on-site place managers who live within the community. This model would require thorough vetting and dedicated training to ensure resident managers can effectively contribute to security and community well-being.<sup>81</sup> When combined with staff training and expert collaboration, on-site management offers a comprehensive approach to enhancing safety in apartment communities. Communities should experiment with these strategies, assess outcomes, and tailor interventions to meet their unique security needs.

**Build relationships with residents and law enforcement.** Effective training programs should emphasize the importance of building positive relationships with law enforcement as a proactive place management strategy.<sup>82</sup> Collaboration with local law enforcement can improve communication about emerging crime trends and enhance response efforts, ensuring timely and effective interventions. Additionally, properties can establish a Trespass Affidavit (or Right of Entry as it is called in some jurisdictions) on file, as implemented at both Apartment Community A and B. A Trespass Affidavit is a legal document that allows law enforcement to act on behalf of a property owner to remove or arrest trespassers from their property, even when the owner is not physically present.

In addition, place managers can engage residents in crime prevention by organizing regular on-site meetings to discuss crime concerns and mitigation strategies. This could help build a sense of community and collective efficacy, encouraging residents to take an active role in maintaining security. Apartment Community A implemented this approach, although the turnout for these meetings was low, highlighting the need for more effective resident engagement strategies. If there are vetted resident managers on site, these individuals can work to build relationships with residents in their buildings as well.

**Track Data and Incidents.** A crucial component of strengthening place management strategies is the systematic tracking and analysis of crime and security incidents. This ongoing process begins with a *Problem Analysis*, where management reviews incident reports, both from internal logs and police records, to identify the types, frequency, and patterns of crime

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<sup>81</sup> Clarke, R. V., & Bichler-Robertson, G. (1998). Place managers, slumlords and crime in low rent apartment buildings. *Security Journal*, 11(1), 11–19.

<sup>82</sup> Payne, T. C. (2017). Reducing excessive police incidents: Do notices to owners work?. *Security Journal*, 30, 922–939. <https://doi.org/10.1057/sj.2015.2>

occurring within the apartment community. To support this, apartment communities should establish clear and consistent documentation practices, ensuring staff are trained to accurately record, monitor, and escalate incidents to higher management or law enforcement as appropriate.

The insights gained through this analysis then guide the *Problem-Solving phase*, where targeted interventions, such as enhanced access control measures or refined place management practices, can be developed in response to specific security challenges. These might include tighter access controls or stronger place management practices—all tailored responses informed by the data for each property.

Consistent incident tracking also contributes to a growing evidence base on effective crime prevention practices across different types of apartment communities. By integrating data-driven decision-making into security operations, managers can implement more precise and adaptive measures, reduce crime risks and improve overall resident safety. Moreover, collaboration with security consultants or law enforcement can further refine these interventions, address vulnerabilities, and strengthen long-term crime prevention outcomes. Ultimately, this approach will improve our understanding of crime patterns in apartment communities and highlight the factors that influence crime rates and types across different properties.

Taken together, these strategies can serve as recommendations for place managers and staff who aim to build safe communities and engage in effective place management practices. Effective security in apartments requires proper management, which may vary based on property size, design, operational and physical security measures, and current crime rates. These factors should inform the creation of policies and the implementation of security measures that target crime in an intentional and thoughtful way.

Security policies and procedures should be specifically tailored to each property, with clearly defined responsibilities for staff, including who manages security, how incidents are reported, and how a liaison with local law enforcement is maintained. Additionally, these policies should include security awareness training for both residents and staff, ensuring everyone understands their role in maintaining security. The enforcement of these policies often relies on the place manager, making their role central to the security and overall well-being of the tenants on the property.

**Communicate With Residents.** Property managers should consider notifying residents about chronic crime problems at the property to ensure that they are aware of potential risks and



can take appropriate precautions. When communicating such issues, management should clearly describe the nature of the problem and outline any steps being taken to address or prevent recurrence. This helps build transparency and trust within the community.

An essential consideration is how incident information is conveyed to residents, for example via tenant portals (as seen in Apartment Community B). Transparent, timely communication can enhance trust, raise awareness, and provide residents with practical safety tips. However, failure to inform tenants about elevated threat levels, particularly involving violent crime, may be viewed in litigation as a breach of the property manager's duty of care. This highlights the importance of balancing transparency with the risk of causing unnecessary alarm or exposing the property to liability.

To manage this balance, apartment communities should establish clear policies governing when and how incident information is shared. These policies should aim to keep residents informed while minimizing miscommunication and legal risk. Additionally, property managers should reinforce relevant security procedures that residents can follow to help prevent future incidents. Thoughtful, consistent communication not only enhances tenant safety but also promotes a shared approach to crime prevention within the apartment community.

**Hire a Property Activity Coordinator.** A property activity coordinator, particularly in larger apartment communities, could serve as a dedicated liaison between management, residents, and third parties (e.g., security officers or law enforcement), ensuring that property policies and lease terms are consistently enforced. Responsibilities include monitoring resident activity, maintaining criminal records, processing lease terminations, conducting grievance hearings, and fostering open communication with tenants. This role can significantly improve community relations, accountability, and overall property management efficiency.

## **CONCLUSION**

By incorporating training, education, and targeted crime prevention strategies, managers, staff, and landlords can more effectively reduce crime and enhance security. Operational security measures that strengthen guardianship are essential for identifying and mitigating risks. These steps enable place managers to address security concerns, foster a sense of community, and, when applied systematically, create secure environments that support resident well-being. By implementing these recommendations, property managers can minimize costs while establishing lasting crime prevention strategies and build thriving, safe communities through effective place management.

## LIMITATIONS

While the evidence presented draws attention to the benefits of strong place managers in reducing crime in apartments, research is not without its limitations. Currently, literature finds support for the role of place managers and their ability to reduce crime; however, more research is needed to understand how different place management strategies work in various settings and under which conditions in different types of apartments communities. This includes crime types, property design or layout, property size, and unique neighborhood characteristics that can impact how place managers not only target crime on the property, but which place management strategies are most effective and in what context.

Additionally, place managers often have limited control over incidents that occur within private, leased units, posing challenges to fully addressing crime on the property. Moreover, the effectiveness of security measures depends on the type of offender and their underlying motivation for committing the crime.<sup>83</sup> As such, implementing the strategies suggested in this article may not deter all offenders or prevent all crimes. Nonetheless, both the empirical evidence and the strong theoretical foundation support the value of place managers in crime reduction and community safety. Future research should work to expand on place management strategies in apartments.

Another limitation arises in the evaluation of our case studies. While evidence strongly suggests that implementing strict place management strategies in Apartment Communities A and B led to crime reduction, our analysis primarily relied on descriptive statistics. As such, findings indicating that effective place management practices reduced crime should be interpreted with caution. While these findings provide a snapshot of the data, they do not offer insight into the underlying mechanisms driving the change in crime rates, nor do they establish a cause-and-effect relationship. Despite this limitation, the data highlight important trends before and after the implementation of new management and underscore the critical role of management practices in shaping security outcomes. Future research should engage

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<sup>83</sup> Clarke, R. V. (1997). *Situational crime prevention: Successful case studies* (2nd ed.). Harrow and Heston. Retrieved from [https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/g/files/litvpz3631/files/scp2\\_intro\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/g/files/litvpz3631/files/scp2_intro_0_0.pdf); Cornish, D. B., & Clarke, R. V. (1986). *The reasoning criminal: Rational choice perspectives on offending*. Springer-Verlag; Piquero, A. R., & Pogarsky, G. (2002). Beyond Stafford and Warr's reconceptualization of deterrence: Personal and vicarious experiences, impulsivity, and offending behavior. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 39(2), 153–186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427802039002>

more deeply with apartment communities to conduct evaluations that assess the effectiveness of specific place management interventions on crime. Such studies would contribute to the limited yet growing body of literature on place management in housing. In sum, the evidence from both literature and case studies lays a strong foundation in support of place managers and the important role they play, where well-trained place managers, including those in historically high-crime properties, can help reduce crime.

Given these limitations, the ideas in this article do not define a "standard of care" for apartment communities but are meant to inspire further ideas and foster experimentation to discover what works.

## **CALL TO ACTION: Advancing Place Management for Apartment Communities**

The impact of place management in crime reduction is evident. When apartment communities adopt proactive operational practices alongside thoughtful environmental design, they help create safer and more resilient communities. Property managers can play a central role in this effort by investing in staff training, applying evidence-based strategies, and building strong partnerships with residents, law enforcement, and security professionals. Collaborating with security consultants can further help identify vulnerabilities and align practices with current research and industry standards.

Beyond immediate security benefits and reduced crime costs, the consistent application of place management strategies offers valuable opportunities to advance the field through ongoing evaluation. Future research should prioritize identifying best practices, assessing long-term outcomes, and determining which interventions are most effective across diverse housing types. By integrating implementation with rigorous research, stakeholders can continuously refine their approaches while deepening the understanding of crime prevention in apartment settings. These efforts not only enhance security but also contribute to building stronger, more sustainable communities.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH SUMMARY TABLE

## Place Management for Apartment Crime Prevention Research Summary Table

| Study Citation                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Crime Type(s) / Categories                                               | Crime Prevention Measure Assessed                                         | Key Finding(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Does study address Residential Communities?            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Clarke, R. V., & Bichler-Robertson, G. (1998). Place managers, slumlords and crime in low rent apartment buildings. <i>Security Journal</i> , 11(1), 11-19.                                                                       | Crime unspecified: measured through arrest records and calls for service | Problem-oriented policing; Situational crime prevention; Place management | <p>Arrests went up in years following the purchase of a property by Slumlord A (Case Study #1). This suggests that poor management and a lack of screening tenants made things worse at the property.</p> <p>In Case Study #2, crime dropped quickly in buildings owned by Slumlord B after they were forced to hire good property managers. Managers visited tenants, cleaned up the property, improved lighting, landscaping, parking, instituted credit checks, and required higher security deposits to name a few. After these changes, arrests went down from 52 before new management to just 6 and 12 in the years after.</p> <p>Crime - unspecified. This study looked at arrests at the property.</p> | Yes - Apartments                                       |
| Douglas, S., & Welsh, B. C. (2022). There has to be a better way: Place managers for crime prevention in a surveillance society. <i>International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice</i> , 46(1), 67-80. D3A3:E3 | Systematic review: Vandalism, vehicle crimes, disorder, violent crime    | Situational crime prevention; place management                            | <p>Of the six studies that met the inclusion criteria, place manager programs were different in each one. Some were in high-rise buildings and included things like concierge services, front desk staff, and controlling who was allowed to enter. Overall, the studies showed support for place management and suggested that it is a promising but underused crime prevention method. However, more research is needed to be sure of its effects.</p> <p>This systematic review does not disaggregate by crime type, nor does it address the research question.</p>                                                                                                                                          | Yes (systematic review including high-rise apartments) |
| Eck, J. E. (1995). A general model of the geography of illicit retail marketplaces. <i>Crime and place</i> , 4, 67-93.                                                                                                            | Illicit markets (drug dealing, stolen goods, prostitution, and firearms) | Routine Activities Theory; Place management                               | <p>Illicit sellers need weak control by place managers; locations where place management is weak are especially vulnerable. Many cocaine (78.4%) and methamphetamine dealers (59.6%) lived in apartments.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Yes - Apartments                                       |

**Place Management for Apartment Crime Prevention  
Research Summary Table**

| Study Citation                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Crime Type(s) / Categories                                          | Crime Prevention Measure Assessed           | Key Finding(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Does study address Residential Communities?                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Eck, J. E. (2017). The opportunity structure for bad place management: A theory to assist effective regulation of high crime places. In <i>Unraveling the Crime-Place Connection</i> , Volume 22 (pp. 157-187). Routledge. | Property crime, disorder crime, drug crime                          | Routine Activities Theory; Place management | This chapter finds that illegal markets are more common in places where there is weak oversight by property owners or managers, which can increase visible drug sales, selling of stolen goods, and other public disorder crimes.                                                    | Yes (through a review) - Single- and multi-family                                             |
| Eck, J. E., & Guerette, R. (2012). Prevention: Theory, evidence, and policy. In B. C. Welsh & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), <i>The Oxford handbook of crime prevention</i> (pp. 354–383). New York: Oxford University Press.    | Drug crime, Burglary and theft, Violent crime, Multiple crime types | Situational crime prevention                | Review of 149 evaluations: 77% of SCP efforts reduced crime. Most residential studies focused on burglary or theft. Access control and alarms were effective in 93% of studies; place management in 80%. Surveillance showed mixed results; property marking was mostly ineffective. | Yes - Includes studies on apartments and single-family homes (39 residential-focused studies) |
| Eck, J. E., Linning, S. J., & Herold, T. D. (2023). <i>Place management and crime: Ownership and property rights as a source of social control</i> . Berlin: Springer.                                                     | Property crime, Disorder crime, Violent crime                       | Place management                            | Strong property rights and responsible ownership help reduce property crimes, disorder, and violence in communities by encouraging better place management and social control.                                                                                                       | Yes – discusses various property types, including multi-family housing and residential areas. |

## Place Management for Apartment Crime Prevention Research Summary Table

| Study Citation                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Crime Type(s) / Categories                                                                | Crime Prevention Measure Assessed              | Key Finding(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Does study address Residential Communities? |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Eck, J. E., Madensen, T., Payne, T., Wilcox, P., Fisher, B. S., & Scherer, H. (2009). Situational crime prevention at specific locations in community context: Place and neighborhood effects. US Department of Justice.  | Violent crime (calls for service)                                                         | Situational crime prevention; Place management | Violence in apartments is linked to poor/weak management practices (e.g., loitering, lack of upkeep, rent delinquency), physical location (corner lots, near bus stops), and neighborhood conditions. Neighborhood disadvantage increase violent crime.                                                                                                                                                                | Yes - Apartments (and bars)                 |
| Eck, J. E., & Wartell, J. (1998). Improving the management of rental properties with drug problems: A randomized experiment. Crime Prevention Studies, 9(16), 1-185.                                                      | Drug-related crime, nuisance crime                                                        | Routine Activities Theory; Place management    | 46% of the crime drop happened in the first 6 months; properties where landlords met with police ('meeting places') had 87% fewer crimes than control properties. The remaining 64% of the drop happened over the next 24 months, showing the meetings had a lasting effect. Training landlords to manage rental properties more effectively led to reduced drug activity and calls for service at problem properties. | Yes - Apartments                            |
| Farr, J., & Moynihan, P. (1994). Highgate Estate - Estate Based Management (Concierge) Initiative." In S. Osborn (ed.), Housing Safe Communities: An Evaluation of Recent Initiatives. London: Safer Neighbourhoods Unit. | Burglary, auto theft, vandalism and arson, robbery, drug crime, woundings, sexual offense | Situational crime prevention                   | The installation of concierge staff and entry systems led to reductions in crime and increased residents' sense of safety. Burglaries decreased by 33% during the concierge program and dropped an additional 39% after it ended. Approximately 85% of tenants reported feeling safer. Other types of crime were monitored but showed little change.                                                                   | Yes - High rise blocks                      |

**Place Management for Apartment Crime Prevention  
Research Summary Table**

| Study Citation                                                                                                                                                                                      | Crime Type(s) / Categories                                          | Crime Prevention Measure Assessed              | Key Finding(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Does study address Residential Communities?                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gilchrist, A. M., Deryol, R., Payne, T. C., & Wilcox, P. (2019). Place management in neighborhood context: an analysis of crime at apartments in Cincinnati. <i>Security Journal</i> , 32, 501-522. | Violent crime;<br>Property crime;<br>Disorder crime;<br>Total crime | Place management                               | Criminal background checks helped lower disorder crimes, and tenant screening reduced property crimes, mainly in advantaged neighborhoods with fewer opportunities for crime. However, in disadvantaged neighborhoods, these strategies were less effective and sometimes linked to higher crime. The number of eviction notices, hired security personnel, and maintenance workers was associated with more disorder crimes, and security staff plus Section 8 housing were linked to higher violent and total crime. This shows that neighborhood context affects how well place management strategies work for different types of crime. | Yes - Apartments                                                                              |
| Gomory, H., & Desmond, M. (2023). Neighborhoods of last resort: How landlord strategies concentrate violent crime. <i>Criminology</i> , 61(2), 270-294                                              | Violent crime                                                       | Routine Activities Theory;<br>Place management | Between 2016 and 2018, 49% of properties that had a housing problem or eviction filing also had an assault happen there. Only 20% of properties without those problems had an assault. In this neighborhood, evictions, landlord issues, and assaults are closely linked at the property level. High-crime areas also tend to attract landlords who manage poorly. Landlord evictions and neglect was associated with burglaries, robberies, and theft.                                                                                                                                                                                     | Yes - Apartments                                                                              |
| Herold, T. D. (2024). A Place Management Approach to Promote Evidence-Based Crime Prevention. <i>The Oxford Handbook of Evidence-Based Crime and Justice Policy</i> , 466.                          | General Crime (review)                                              | Routine Activities Theory;<br>Place management | Place management strategies can promote effective crime prevention using evidence-based methods.<br><br>This is a review on the positive impact of overall crime prevention, and does not disaggregate by crime type.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Yes – discusses various property types, including multi-family housing and residential areas. |

# Place Management for Apartment Crime Prevention

## Research Summary Table

| Study Citation                                                                                                                                                      | Crime Type(s) / Categories                                      | Crime Prevention Measure Assessed           | Key Finding(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Does study address Residential Communities? |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Lofftus, N. (2017). Ok, O. C. S. Evaluation of the Oklahoma City Safe Ok Grant Program.                                                                             | Crime<br>Violent crime<br>Property crime<br>Burglary<br>Robbery | CPTED, Situational crime prevention         | <p>From 2013 to 2016, during the SAFE Oklahoma Grant Program, more than 39% of all violent crime in the area was reported. When officers visited apartment complexes more often, gang arrests, felony arrests, and calls for service at those apartments also went up.</p> <p>As the number of walk-through patrols increased, calls for service and felony arrests also went up. At the same time, robberies went down when calls for service increased. This could be explained by officers being more likely to gather information needed that leads to an arrest.</p> <p>Violent crime decreased by 21.6% (homicide by 50%, rape by 60%, robbery by 29.6%, and aggravated assault by 11.6%).</p> | Yes - Apartments                            |
| Madensen, T. D. (2007). Bar management and crime: Toward a dynamic theory of place management and crime hotspots (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati). | Violent crime, property crime, disorder crime                   | Routine Activities Theory; Place management | Shows how managing bars and similar places can affect crime hotspots over time. Good management can reduce violence and disorder in these places.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | No - Bars                                   |
| Mazerolle, L. G., Kadleck, C., & Roehl, J. (1998). Controlling drug and disorder problems: The role of place managers. Criminology, 36(2), 371-404.                 | Drug crimes, disorder crimes                                    | Routine Activities Theory; Place management | Place managers who actively manage street blocks, especially working collectively with neighbors, reduce drug dealing and disorder.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | No - Street blocks                          |

**Place Management for Apartment Crime Prevention  
Research Summary Table**

| Study Citation                                                                                                                                                                       | Crime Type(s) / Categories                                           | Crime Prevention Measure Assessed                              | Key Finding(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Does study address Residential Communities? |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Meredith, C., & Paquette, C. (1992). Crime prevention in high-rise rental apartments: Findings of a demonstration project. Security Journal, 3(3), 161–167.                          | Property crime;<br>Violent crime;<br>Disorder crime                  | Target hardening;<br>Apartment Watch                           | There was an 82% decrease in break and enters during the implementation of the crime prevention program where respondents became more aware of crime in apartments. Break-ins went down from 44 before the program to just 8 after it was put in place. Other crime types remained relatively the same.                                                                                                                                           | Yes                                         |
| Payne, T. C. (2010). Does changing ownership change crime? An analysis of apartment ownership and crime in Cincinnati. University of Cincinnati. Doctoral Dissertation.              | Crime - Unspecified (includes disorder, property, and violent crime) | Routine Activities Theory; Place management (ownership change) | In apartments with a history of crime, ownership change was linked to about a 10% increase in crime. In some neighborhoods, crime decreased after ownership changed, showing neighborhood matters.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Yes - Apartments                            |
| Payne, T. C. (2017). Reducing excessive police incidents: Do notices to owners work?. Security Journal, 30, 922-939.                                                                 | Nuisance crimes                                                      | Routine Activities Theory; Place management                    | Police incidents reduced by 24-28% after notices; 2/3 of properties had declines in police calls for 2 years, showing owner notification can reduce crime. Place management likely changed through cost-effective measures like tenant screening, staffing, and marketing.                                                                                                                                                                        | Yes - Apartments                            |
| Townsley, M., Reid, S., Reynald, D. M., Rynne, J., & Hutchins, B. (2013). Crime in High-Rise Buildings: Planning for Vertical Community Safety. Australian Institute of Criminology. | Crime (property crime, violent crime, and disorder)                  | Routine Activities Theory; Place management                    | The report included 3 studies: (1) Crime concentrated in a few high-rise buildings; longer-term residents had lower crime. (2) Place management was linked to territoriality but not always to active guardianship. (3) Safety perceptions depended on building tenure and design. Theft was highest where place management was weak, especially in mixed tenure buildings, even with onsite managers. Theft was lower when guardianship was low. | Yes - High rise apartments                  |