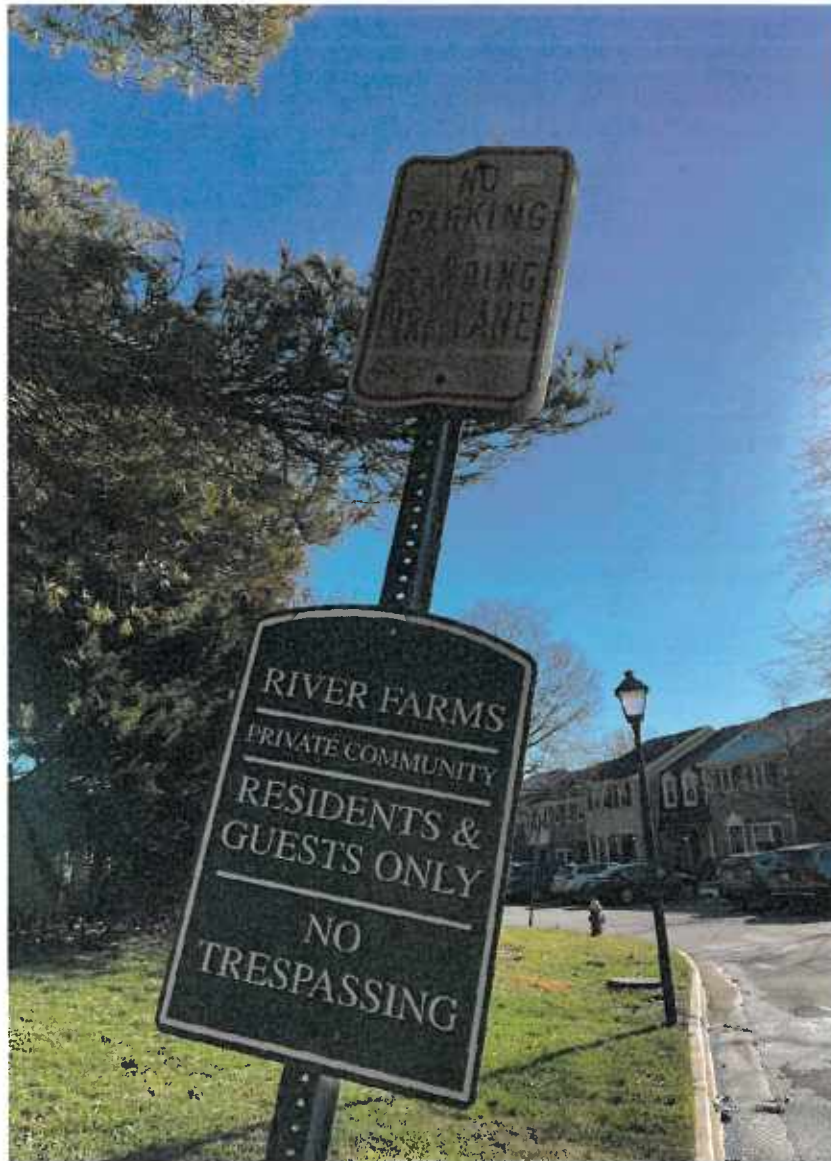


River Farms Community

Security Assessment



Fairfax County Police Department

West Springfield District Station, Crime Prevention Office

Report Prepared by: MPO Anthony L. Capizzi

Overview:

This report is provided for an area survey of the River Farms community. A walk through, and drive through, of the area was conducted by this officer on January 11, 2024. The recommendations contained within this report are based upon the training and experience of the officer conducting the assessment. Others who receive different training and experience may make other recommendations. The recommendations are made in good faith and every effort has been made to insure they are specifically applicable to the environment reviewed. Nothing in this survey precludes the possibility that other solutions, or recommendations, are applicable to the concerns addressed. Studies have indicated that any action taken to reduce crime will serve that purpose. It is not possible to guarantee to what extent crime will be reduced if all, or any, of the following recommendations are acted upon.

The analysis completed at this site is based on accepted principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), which are Natural Surveillance, Access Control, Territorial Reinforcement, and Maintenance, and on research conducted for this report. The first section of this report includes observations during the walk-through of the property. The next section contains the recommendations.

This assessment should be used as a guideline for immediate, short, and long-term planning in the safety and security of the community. It is recommended that a reassessment of the property, and concerned areas, should be completed yearly.

Site Description:

The River Farms community is within the Alexandria area of Fairfax County, VA. There are five streets that make up the townhome community of 192 units. There is a swimming pool, playground, and tennis court. The property has some minor changes in landscape elevation. The community is within the Mount Vernon Magisterial District.



Historical Data:

The property started being developed in 1978 under the name of First River Farms Association, then later changed to River Farms Conservancy. There is an active homeowner's association within the community, along with Neighborhood Watch that is becoming more active. The security survey was requested due to an increase in crime in the surrounding community and they wanted to keep it from spreading to their community. River Farms have never had a security survey performed. They have had some recent larceny from automobile cases that caused concern.

I reviewed the calls for service in the community since 2009:

- Tis Well Dr-1786 calls for service
- Cedar Landing Ct-215 calls for service
- Clifton Farm Ct-202 calls for service
- Carter Farm Ct-190 calls for service
- La Faye Ct-66 calls for service

I reviewed many of the calls, and the vast majority were for service calls only. The large number of calls on Tis Well Dr is due to the nursing facility. There were a lot of animal complaints, domestic situations, and mental health calls.

Observations and Recommendations:

- I was advised that there was a request for a FLOCK system to be purchased and operated by the HOA.
 - The request was denied due to the expense and number of cameras needed. At this time, I would agree that the price is too much for the system at this time. If the price comes down, or violent crime increases, it should be considered again.
- There were many light posts in the community.
 - I am unable to verify if the bulbs are LED or not. I was advised that the poles were updated about five years ago. I would suggest having LED bulbs in the lights.
 - Have your Neighborhood Watch go through the community at night. Have two people walk about thirty feet apart and attempt to describe the person. If you cannot accurately see the person to describe them, then you need more or updated lighting.
 - If you need to replace the bulbs, consider getting new light fixtures that focus the light more downward instead of straight out.
- There were many signs throughout the community that were worn down and difficult to read.
 - Replace all signs in the community that are difficult to read or look in bad condition.
 - As part of the Broken Windows theory, all items should be repaired as soon as possible to show the rest of the community that you all care. It also shows an expectation of how the property is to be maintained by owners, tenants, and visitors. This includes replacing the signs, painting the curbs, picking up trash, covering graffiti, etc.



- There were signs in the community advising of the pet waste expectations.
 - Great use of the signs to show what is expected.
- I observed a couple of streetlights that had trees growing too close to them.
 - The trees need trimmed back to keep the light from being blocked. This gives people the ability to see potential danger coming and makes it more difficult for people to hide.
- There were many bushes and trees in the community that were out of recommended heights.
 - Consider trimming bushes down to two-to-three feet tall, with a ten-inch canopy, and trees should have a 7-to-8-foot canopy. This helps to keep people from hiding easily.



- There were some “No Trespassing” signs going onto the property.
 - Great idea to have “No Trespassing” signs. Make sure they are placed at all vehicle and pedestrian entrances into the community. This will limit their ability to use excuses about why they may be in the area.
 - Consider, if it isn’t already completed, signing an “Authorization for Enforcement” letter with the police department. This will allow the police to enforce registration and inspection parking violations, along with trespassing violations.
- A Neighborhood Watch sign was clearly posted.
 - Great job with posting the NW sign and keeping the bushes away from it.
- The pool area has a large, wooden fence around it, with a metal gate/fence near the entrance.
 - Great use of the fencing around the pool and entrance.
 - Nice usage of signs for expectations at the pool.



- Some of the street signs on the property are turned in a bad position or bent.
 - Fix all the signs so you can properly know the road you are on.
 - Fix all the signs that are bent/leaning to keep pride in the community, and to keep people from using it as an excuse that they could not easily read the sign.
- The parking spaces are either numbered or labeled for visitors.
 - Great work labeling the parking spaces to keep tenants from arguing over parking issues.
- The walkways in the community had some areas that presented tripping hazards.
 - Consider replacing the walkways with new pavers or concrete.
- The playground appeared to be well maintained, with a few pieces of trash and an electrical box with graffiti.
 - Consider placing a sign at the entrances to the playground to explain the rules and expectations.
 - Make sure trash is disposed of quickly and that graffiti is covered just as quickly.



- A few of the residences had alarm signs and/or video doorbell systems.
 - Great use of the alarm signs and doorbell systems. Keep encouraging the community to monitor their cameras and to share footage of illegal/suspicious behavior.
 - Make sure the house numbers are visible from the street.
- I was advised that a lot of the community does not use their front porch light.
 - Remind people to turn on their front porch lights at sunset and turn them off at dawn. This helps to keep the community safer because criminals do not like to be illuminated. You can place photosensitive devices to illuminate the lights automatically.
 - Advise the community to place rear lights on motion sensors so you can be alerted if someone enters your property.
- During the research for this community, I found that the tennis courts do belong to your community.
 - Continue to monitor for suspicious and illegal activity. Notify the police via the non-emergency number if there are any criminal violations.
- The community does have social media, including Nextdoor, Neighbors and Facebook.
 - With all those ways to reach the community, make sure you also send out the information in basic email form. Some people will not use social media.
 - Send out information on NW and other crime prevention tips.
 - Participate in National Night Out every year to help the community know each other and the police department.
 - Consider sponsoring classes the community might be interested in, including NW, Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events, Personal Safety, etc.



General Crime Prevention Concepts:

The recommendations made in this report are based on the accepted principles of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) which are natural surveillance, access control, territorial reinforcement, and maintenance/management and on research conducted for this report. CPTED is defined as the use of proper design and effective use of the build environment to reduce crime and the fear of crime resulting in improved quality of life.

Natural Surveillance relies on the fundamental principle that criminals do not want to be observed. Surveillance increases the risk that offenders might be caught by allowing the public to better view and observe a potential crime area. This natural surveillance can be achieved by increasing and maintaining lighting and removing obstructions, such as overgrown landscaping, that would otherwise obscure the public's view.

Access Control relies on doors, fences, locks, shrubs, and other physical elements to keep unauthorized individuals from gaining access to the property. Semi-public locations can still achieve access control by controlling the foot traffic on the property with fencing, lighting, and landscaping and directing visitors to the main office with the use of properly marked entrances and signs.

Territorial Reinforcement works off the theory that people will protect a territory, or location, they feel is their own and that in turn people will respect the territory of others. A clearly defined boundary between public and private or semi-private areas can be achieved with fencing, signs, routine maintenance, and landscaping. Intruders will be more readily identified when the space is well defined by using these techniques.

Maintenance and management rely on a group's sense of pride in caring for a location and territorial reinforcement. A location that has become run down or gives the impression that no one cares about the property will attract crime. The property will portray to criminals that their activities will go unnoticed.

An important concept relevant to this assessment is procedures, communication, and education. Any security measure may be applied but will only work if employee and member involvement occur. People must not only be alert, but also willing to report suspicious activity

when it occurs. Studies have shown there is a critical difference between space that is defensible and space that is defended. Even with all possible security measures in place the area may still not be defended if there is little to no member and employee involvement, a dominating fear to get involved, or widespread apathy. Design can provide preconditions for effective control, but it cannot create such control if the employees/members are not educated and aware. Training can be provided through the Crime Prevention Office and the members are encouraged to participate.

I appreciate the opportunity to assess the property. If there are any questions, or concerns, about the report, feel free to contact me anytime. Thanks, and take care.

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