



Photos by ROB WIDDIS/Special to the Free Press

Shawn Stafford, above, and his company, Real Estate Service Solutions, spent \$3 million in renovations to the Hoover Square apartments in Warren, improving the plumbing, windows, siding, roofs and landscaping. They also installed new ceramic tile, carpet, kitchen cabinets and bath fixtures.

Old haven of crime 'feels like home now'

Owners fix up complex, its image

WARREN

By CHRISTY ARBOSCELLO
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The drug dealers, prostitutes, vandals and troublemakers tolerated by the previous management were shown the door.

Then, the real work began for a Detroit company rehabbing a Warren apartment complex — and its dicey image.

Real Estate Service Solutions' \$3-million investment in Hoover Square, formerly known as the Warren Plaza Apartments, went beyond evictions.

After buying the foreclosed property at 10 Mile and Hoover in March, the company is improving the plumbing, windows, siding, roofs and landscaping and installed ceramic tile, carpet, kitchen cabinets and bath fixtures.

Today, managers patrol the grounds, looking for suspicious behavior. If they stumble across trouble, they confront the tenants and report the matter to police.

Despite terminating 15% of the leases in the 342-unit complex, occupancy has soared from 50% to 85% as safety and conditions have improved, the company said.

"This was a good example of a project on the south side that we turned around and made better for the south side residents because there were just tons of complaints about that property," said Shawn Stafford, company president and chief executive officer.

"We've been getting so many calls just from people who said we're helping their property val-

ue."

Warren police said Thursday that changes made by the new owners have led to a drop in crime at the complex.

"I think that things are a lot better over there," Lt. Scott Pavlik said. "We still have incidents. We still have runs, but we don't have the drug dealing."

Their most recent run to the building was more than a month ago, when the Warren Police Emergency Response Team responded to a barricaded gunman who later surrendered.

"That has become the exception as opposed to the norm over there," Pavlik said.

For the last eight years that he's overseen road patrol, there was all sorts of trouble at the complex. At one point, police were there daily, he said.

About five years ago, a maintenance worker was found drinking and smoking marijuana in the parking lot with a loaded handgun on him. A barricaded gunman had a 3-day standoff with police the previous year, police said.

Lacquicia McCain, 36, has lived in the complex for the past two years with her husband and two children, ages 5 and 10.

"It's a whole lot better now. I'd say it's a 100% A-plus upgrade," McCain said of the renovations and safety improvements.

Before, "it was all raggedy and torn down. It feels like a home now."

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LT. SCOTT PAVLIK of the Warren Police Department