

Smile...You're In Lynwood

About Lynwood

City in Los Angeles County, California, United States with a population of 73,212.

The Challenge

Rid the community of prostitution and gang-related crime.

The Solution

LEVERAGE Video Management Suite installed in problem areas throughout the community with 24/7 feed to the sheriff station dispatch center.

The Result

Received All American City Award 2010.

The Benefits

Force Multiplication:

Allows for continuous policing without officer involvement permitting more efficient resource use.

Citizen Quality of Life:

Lowers crime rates, increases arrests ratios and allows to close more cases.

Rapid ROI:

Solving crime incidents in less time & at a lower cost.

Effectiveness & Security Improvement:

Provides more details to the officer before he even gets to the place of the incident.

Incorporated in 1921, the City of Lynwood has kept to its vision of building and maintaining a safe, self-sufficient, and pride-filled community that provides access to recreational, educational, and economical opportunities to residents and businesses alike. Lynwood's strength lies in its implementation of innovative programs and projects to address pressing challenges that impact the community. One troubled area in particular overwhelmed Lynwood's ability to address. For 10 years Lynwood has been dealing with an ongoing battle to rid the community of prostitution.

Lynwood's busiest corridor, Long Beach Boulevard, is a 2.25 mile thoroughfare that extends from the north to south city limits. Long Beach Boulevard also serves as the only city access to and from the I-105 freeway. Early mornings and late evenings were prime times for 30-40 prostitutes to solicit their services along the Boulevard. In 2006 a new elementary school was constructed on Long Beach Boulevard, increasing the urgency in eliminating this blight.

Lynwood takes their city back

Fed up with no visible resolution to this problem, residents, business owners, School District personnel, and parents armed with photos, maps and videos in-hand attended several City Council Meetings demanding that the City Council do something about the prostitution problem. The City Council set up meetings with local business owners, residents, law enforcement, and local motel owners to discuss what united efforts could be done.

Shortly before these meetings, the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, Century Station, under the direction of then Captain James Hellmold (now Asst Sheriff LA County), Lynwood had already implemented a tactical surveillance trial in partnership with Leverage Information Systems (LEVERAGE). The LEVERAGE Video Management Suite (VMS) was implemented with camera installations at the entrances to two hospitals and at Century Station itself. Shortly after beginning this trial, the Century Station Command Center caught on camera an incident that enabled the Sheriff's department to intervene and neutralize an escalating conflict between two warring gangs. Based on the success of this trial, Captain Hellmold knew that expanding the LEVERAGE implementation to cover Long Beach Boulevard would dramatically curb the prostitution. By the end of 2008, Lynwood's Advance Surveillance and Protection (ASAP) program was born. Its goal was to utilize technology and help the community unite and work as a team to take their city back from the gangs.

Lynwood's LEVERAGE VMS Implementation

Like many others, Lynwood was a city suffering from budget constraints. But despite the lack of budget, the consensus was that this was a priority issue that needed to be addressed immediately. In October of 2008 the City approved an allocation of \$250,000 for a LEVERAGE video surveillance camera project dedicated specifically to eliminate the problem with prostitution. With this news the community now knew that their voices and concerns were heard and a resolution was coming soon.

By the end of October 2008 the first of 10 video surveillance cameras was installed on Long Beach Boulevard as a part of Lynwood's National Crime Prevention Month activities. Several residents and business owners, with the inclusion and support from the Los Angeles County Sheriff, came out and attended the unveiling of the first video surveillance camera on Long Beach Boulevard and the new signs purchased for the project that read "Smile...You're in Lynwood." Strategically placed throughout the city, these signs were designed to put individuals who came to Lynwood with bad intentions on notice that they were entering a monitored public safety zone. Although the signs are lighthearted, the Los Angeles County Sheriff himself made it clear to everyone at the press conference that prostitution, gang activity, tagging and drug dealing will no longer be tolerated and anyone bringing that type of activity to Lynwood will be arrested.

LEVERAGE Makes Lynwood a Safer City

In early 2009 the camera installation was completed with five on the busy Long Beach Boulevard corridor, and five in other targeted areas. Today, the City, Sheriff's Department, and residents agree that there has been a visible reduction in prostitution and illegal activities since the installation of the video surveillance cameras. One small business owner on the boulevard, who had been robbed several times, was very supportive and excited about the project near her business. She stated "it's wonderful to have cameras here."



Relative to the criminal activity, Captain Hellmold has seen the difference. "I don't like to name other cities, but I can tell you that Lynwood crime statistics are significantly lower," he said. "Whereas in the past, Lynwood used to be thought of as a dangerous and violent area, it's now been turned around and businesses are seeking to invest in the area."

While Lynwood isn't the only city the Century Sheriff's Station patrols, its major crime statistics in multiple categories have been significantly reduced and are dramatically lower than surrounding areas, Hellmold said:

"The decrease in crimes along Long Beach Boulevard where the cameras are located is proof that our money was well spent," stated Mayor Maria Santillon. *"When crime is low, residents feel safer. Every time I get the opportunity to brag about our ASAP program to council members from other cities, I do, because it feels great to be able to tell others that crime is at an all-time low in our city."* According to the Sheriff's Department, these efforts have resulted in the lowest number of homicides in the city since 1985. Law Enforcement, City Officials, and the community at-large believe that the use of LEVERAGE VMS, along with additional complementary new technologies, is a major reason for this success.