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Elmwood SPI-Max Project (ESP) - Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Members of Winnipeg Police Service's East District (ED), in collaboration with the City of Winnipeg and Manitoba Justice, and with help from other police units, engaged in an intensive crime suppression, proactive policing, and deterrence project in Winnipeg's Elmwood area between April 16th and June 24th, 2014. The project area had been identified through crime analysis as having a high amount of crime and traffic incidents, as well as a high volume of calls-for-service.

Through the Smart Policing Initiative (SPI), members of ED have made it their mission to provide a greater level of proactive police response. While the SPI program has been successful in reducing crime and traffic incidents, ED wanted to go even further in Elmwood with a sustained and targeted police presence – a strategy referred to as SPI-Max. The Elmwood project involved warrant sweeps; traffic license plate reader projects; compliance checks; drug projects; identification, arrest & eviction of drug house occupants; break & enter patrols; area bar sweeps; and community canvass and engagement.

PROJECT AIMS

The main objectives of the Elmwood SPI-Max Project were to:

- Improve the feeling of safety within the community
- Reduce calls-for-service in the project area
- Reduce crime in the project area
- Reduce traffic incidents in the project area

METHODS

Winnipeg Police Service's Crime Analysis Unit engaged in a mixed methods evaluation of the Elmwood SPI-Max Project. There were 14 evaluation questions divided into three broad categories including questions on:

- (1) **Community Impact** - such as whether calls-for-service, crime and traffic incidents were reduced;
- (2) **Police Response** - such as how many arrests and seizures were made; and
- (3) **Project Design** - such as what improvements are needed for future SPI-Max projects.

The data to answer these questions were drawn from several sources including: Computer Aided Dispatch-Intergraph, Record Management Systems-Niche, Data Management Systems-Access/IBase, and a qualitative online survey of EDS Membership.

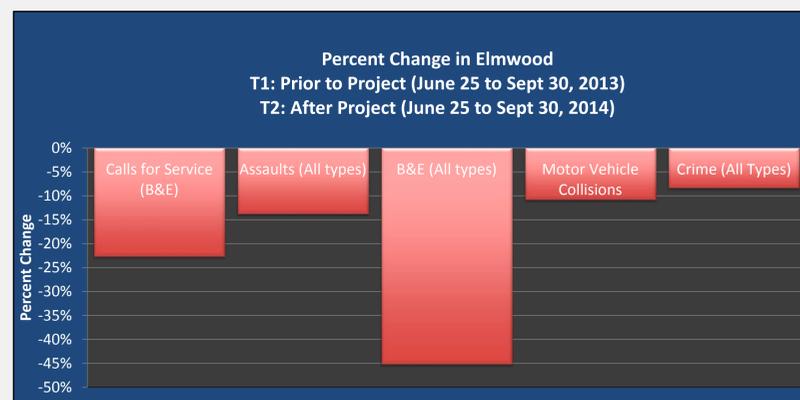
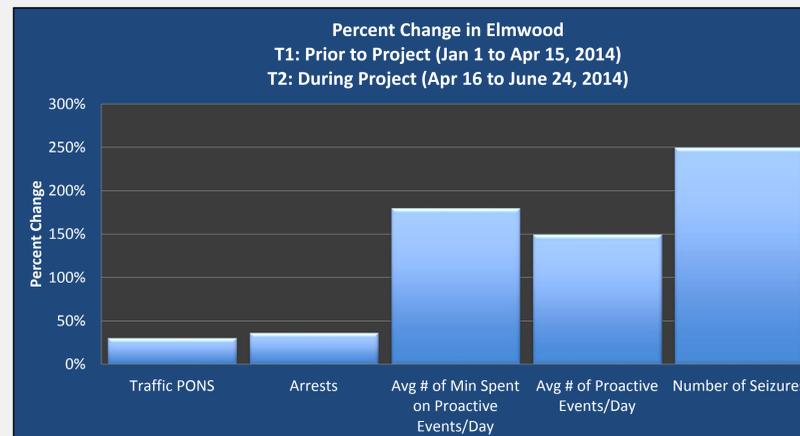
Analysis of quantitative data consisted of percent change, averages, rates, and correlation. Underlying themes and ideas were uncovered and grouped in the qualitative surveys.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Some key findings of the Elmwood SPI-Max project include:

- Crime decreased by 8% over last year (3% more than the city-wide trend of a 5% decrease).
- Assaults (all types) decreased by 14% over last year.
- No evidence of spatial displacement of crime to areas adjacent to Elmwood.
- 150% increase in the average number of high visibility police events per day (including events such as park and walks and spot checks).
- There was a 37% increase in the number of arrests during the project.
- The number of seizures almost tripled during the project.
- The number of Intelligence reports produced increased by 75%.
- ED Membership enjoyed engaging in the project.
- During the project, 133 individuals were identified as living in Elmwood with active warrants. After the project, there were only 36 individuals living in the project area with active warrants.

I was a part of the project from the beginning to the end and the progression of criminal activity decreased as the project unfolded. Word on the street spread quickly once people started getting arrested and with the amount of cruiser cars patrolling the area. – ED Member



DISCUSSION

The Elmwood SPI-Max project was successful in its objectives; however the results may not be sustainable over time. Thus, long term evaluation must take place. Different seasons have different levels of crime and types of crime and therefore the project may not have been as successful if it was undertaken in the winter or fall. For the evaluation, data extraction and cleaning was complicated due to the many different data sources. To improve data reliability, speed in evaluating outcomes, quality of reports and overall efficiency, a single, searchable database should be developed.

Future SPI-Max projects should include more sophisticated intelligence packets developed by the Crime Analysis Unit on persons and places of interest in the project area. Additionally, a new proactive, intimate partner violence strategy should be developed for city-wide implementation since domestic calls for service remain the single largest volume call type in Winnipeg.

SUMMARY

The Elmwood SPI-Max Project had a positive impact on the Elmwood community. There were reductions in certain types of calls-for-service; there were reductions in crime and traffic incidents; and there was a remarkable decrease in the number of individuals living in Elmwood with active warrants. The project also had a positive impact on proactive police response numbers in Elmwood. Based on survey results, ED membership enjoyed engaging in the SPI-Max Project. Several new SPI-Max projects are already being planned for implementation in 2015 and 2016.

REFERENCES

Bell, S. & Brown, C. (Dec 2014). *Elmwood SPI-Max Project (ESP) April 16th to June 24th, 2014 Outcomes Report*. Crime Analysis Unit, Winnipeg Police Service, Winnipeg, MB.

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