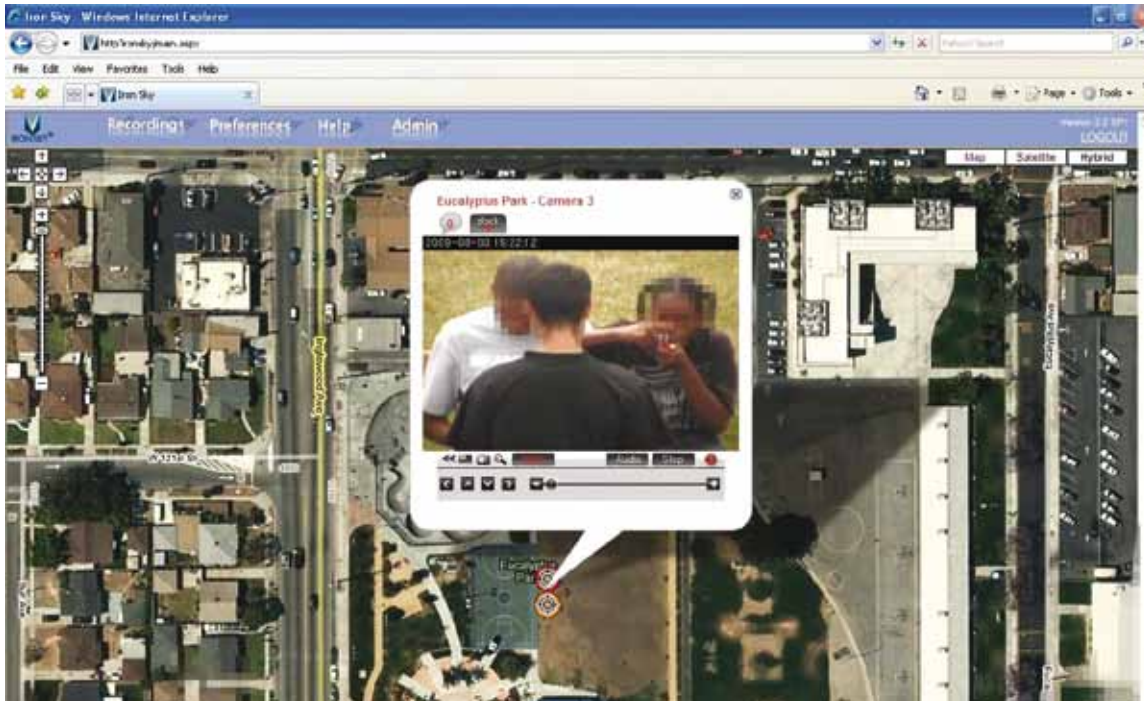


Hawthorne police oust crime from public park with Axis cameras. Network surveillance helps city give Eucalyptus Park back to the community.



Organization:
Hawthorne Police
Department

Location:
Hawthorne, California,
USA

Industry segment:
City surveillance

Application:
Public safety, crime
prevention

Axis partner:
Iron Sky

Mission

Eucalyptus Park, once an inviting recreation center for Hawthorne residents, had become a haven for drug dealers, truants and vandals. To combat crime, the police assigned a full-time officer to the park 11 hours a day. Law enforcement and public works needed a more cost-efficient way to increase public safety and security in the 6-acre park without straining their personnel resources.

Solution

Iron Sky, a Texas-based Axis partner specializing in physical security for city and public surveillance, devised a network surveillance solution that would allow police to remotely monitor park activity by controlling video cameras installed on the grounds from any location in the city. The wireless system connects an array of Axis pan/tilt/zoom (PTZ) and megapixel network cameras through wireless mesh radios that transmit video to a communications tower adjacent to the Hawthorne police station.

Iron Sky's intuitive video management system lets officers view video, manipulate the cameras, record events and search archives using icons superimposed on a Google map of the park.

Result

Since the Axis cameras went live, criminal activity has decreased dramatically. Most disturbances now involve nuisance behavior like loitering and violating park rules about skateboarding outside of designated areas. Officers look at events remotely before sending a patrol car to the park to maximize resources. And video immediately helps police identify and apprehend vandals. The solution has been so successful that the officer who had been stationed at the park is back on his regular street beat.

"Thanks to the Axis IP cameras and the Iron Sky surveillance solution, crime is now basically non-existent in Eucalyptus Park."

Lt. Jim Royer of the Hawthorne police department.

Increasing coverage with fewer resources

Hawthorne, a South Bay community on the outskirts of Los Angeles, created a beautiful six-acre park for the community that included a walking path, picnic shelters, public restrooms, a tot playground, basketball courts and a skate park. Unfortunately, Eucalyptus Park became a hot spot for criminal activity – narcotics, truancy and vandalism. Even with a full-time officer stationed at the park 11 hours a day, police and public works staff were being stretched to the limit responding to calls.

"It was a drain on our resources," said Lt. Jim Royer of the Hawthorne police department. "Plus we were pulling valuable officers away from patrolling the streets."

The police and public works departments began searching for a better strategy to increase public safety and security in the park without monopolizing officers and sacrificing protection of other areas of the city. They decided to install a network video surveillance system to keep close watch over the area remotely and evaluate developing situations before sending a patrol car to investigate further.

Avoiding the lease of costly T-1 lines

Hawthorne, like many cities in California, operates on a tight budget. To avoid the disruption of installing fiber optic cabling and the costly monthly fee associated with leasing T-1 lines, Iron Sky devised a wireless solution to link an array of AXIS 233D PTZ and AXIS 216MFD Megapixel Network Cameras into a secure communications network. The Axis cameras connect to wireless mesh radios within the park and point-to-point radios transmit the video to a communications tower one mile away and adjacent to police headquarters. The camera images are compressed using advanced H.264 standards so that they can be affordably archived by the police department for a full year.

The network uses 3 different frequency ranges to maximize bandwidth and flawlessly transmit the large video files even when passing through multiple wireless radios.

Shortening the surveillance learning curve

To meet the city's goal of being able to train officers to use the system in less than 5 minutes, Iron Sky installed a video management system the company specifically designed for law enforcement users. The open platform provides intuitive navigation through a Google Maps interface. The user selects the desired camera from an icon showing its position on a Google map of the park.

Authorized users can access and control the cameras from any location in the city, including police patrol cars equipped with WiFi mobile devices. The city grants camera access to individuals across departments and agencies through a secure directory of IP addresses, user names and passwords.

Catching criminals in the act

As a crime fighting tool, the Axis/Iron Sky surveillance system has been incredibly effective. "Crime is basically non-existent in the park now," claims Lt. Royer. The severity of incidents today is more in the nature of public nuisances, like loitering and skateboarding outside the designated area of the park.

If police receive a call about a problem in the park, officers check the cameras to see what's going on before entering the scene. They've also found the video invaluable in apprehending and prosecuting troublemakers. When public works found a park bench had been vandalized, a quick search of the archives show the individuals involved. When the vandals returned to the park the following day, police were able to identify the culprits and make an arrest.

"Having remote access to the cameras essentially helps us multiply our eyes on criminal behavior without having to hire additional officers to protect our city," says Lt. Royer. "It's the most remarkable thing I've seen in 27 years in law enforcement."

With the extra high-definition eyes on the park, Hawthorne officers can get back on the other beats that help protect the rest of the city.

