

Federal Way Boosts Security in City's Downtown District

LENSEC integrates video surveillance into crime prevention initiative

CASE STUDY

Local government

ORGANIZATION:

City of Federal Way
Federal Way, Washington

APPLICATION:

Citywide IP Video Surveillance



MISSION

When the police department, city council and the Chamber of Commerce of Federal Way in Washington State learned of the Safe City crime prevention programs being launched in communities stretching from California to Massachusetts, they decided to pursue the initiative in their own downtown district. In addition to an enhanced communication system that united businesses, residents, city officials and the police against crime, Federal Way wanted to incorporate the latest video surveillance technology to maximize the safety and security of its citizens and commercial businesses.

SOLUTION

With funding from Target, the Chamber of Commerce and city government, Federal Way hired Houston-based LENSEC to design a video surveillance solution to remotely monitor the revitalized downtown shopping mall and transit center.

LENSEC is a premier provider of network video surveillance management (NVSM) systems with installations across the United States. The company designed and installed a customized software interface that created interoperability among wired and wireless cameras and other networked devices. LENSEC's design positioned cameras to maximize network efficiency while providing Federal Way police personnel with a

comprehensive view of activity in the core downtown area.

RESULTS

Because the LENSEC NVSM system is so intuitive, it took staff less than 15 minutes of training to learn how to manipulate cameras and zoom in on particular fields of view. LENSEC programmed the network cameras to transmit video feeds to a monitoring station at police headquarters where volunteers send 9-1-1 calls to dispatchers when they observe an incident taking place. Police officers patrolling the downtown area can also access the video through their wi-fi enhanced vehicles. To date, the cameras have already helped law enforcement apprehend a bank robber and an individual charged with domestic violence assault. Because of the clarity of the images, juries accepted the video as irrefutable evidence in court proceedings, leading to the incarceration of the perpetrators.

Piggybacking on existing fiber and wi-fi networks

The city of Federal Way already had a 1GB fiber backbone in place in the downtown area, along with a wireless network for its police cars. LENSEC was able to attach the network cameras to this existing infrastructure, minimizing the cost of deployment. Because the city owned the



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“LENSEC’s IP video surveillance plays a key role in reducing crime, which is critical to our city’s economic redevelopment plan.”

- Brian Wilson, former Chief of Police and currently Interim City Manager Federal Way.

traffic and streetlight poles, LENSEC mounted most of the network cameras and wireless radio transmitters on those structures to avoid lengthy negotiations with the owners of downtown property.

With only six cameras directly connected to the fiber network, LENSEC linked the remaining cameras to each other through a wireless mesh network. *“It takes quite a bit of engineering to program each camera and radio transmitter and map their placement to maximize coverage”,* said Medhi Sadri, IT director for the city of Federal Way. *“But LENSEC took great pains to program all the components and number them before shipping them to us. Then their engineers worked with our IT staff to install them on the poles and attach them to the network. The fact that we needed so little fine-tuning before going live says a lot about LENSEC’s quality control”.*

LENSEC installed 21 new pan/tilt/zoom (PTZ) network cameras along the downtown corridor and integrated six existing IP-based PTZ cameras that the city was currently using to monitor the public park adjacent to the commercial district. The turnkey system, which allows users to monitor and manipulate camera positions through an intuitive city map interface, streams live video from all 27 cameras to a video server at police headquarters. Because the mesh nodes use a proprietary protocol and sophisticated encryption technology, the transmission remains highly secure.

Cracking down on criminal activity

Federal Way, nestled on the shore of Puget Sound between Seattle and Tacoma, Washington, is the first city in the Pacific Northwest to launch the Safe City program. Law enforcement feels that video surveillance plays an integral part in making the downtown area safer for shoppers and businesses. According to Sandy Tudor, a lieutenant in the city’s police department, the flexibility of the sophisticated network of cameras gives law enforcement the freedom to redirect focus to problem areas as needed. *“At one point”,* explains Tudor, *“we were having a rash of purse snatching at bus stops, so we focused our surveillance at those locations. Another time, we redirected the cameras to local*

banks and used the video to identify a robber’s getaway car”.

Though the surveillance system has only been operational a short while, Tudor feels that the cameras will be instrumental in reducing vehicle prowls - people breaking into cars while their owners are shopping as well as nuisance crimes and malicious assaults on people and property.

The city uses a team of trained volunteers to monitor the cameras, which frees officers to patrol the streets where their presence in the community provides an additional deterrent to criminal activity. Officers can also monitor the cameras from their patrol cars and from computers in the police station.

With the LENSEC video management software, users can view feeds from up to 16 cameras on a single screen. They can simply drill down into archived video by calendar date or approximate time of an incident or quickly scan video frames. In addition, a graphic tool lets a user draw a box around a region of interest then quickly locate the first moving object to occupy it making it easier and faster to retrieve images pertinent to a specific investigation.

“Attracting new businesses and customers video surveillance has been the backbone of our entire Safe City program,” states Tom Pierson, CEO of the Federal Way Chamber of Commerce. With further funding from the business community, he hopes the city will be able to expand surveillance into other shopping areas outside the current downtown zone. He would also like to add enhancements such as vehicle license plate recognition to help in the apprehension of suspected offenders.

“Whether you live, work or shop downtown, we want you to feel safe and enjoy the city,” says Pierson. *“From the Chamber of Commerce’s standpoint, the success of this project depends on a strong partnership between the business community, the police department and LENSEC. By pooling our talents, we ensure that Safe City continues being a strategic initiative for promoting the economic growth of our community”.*



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