



Municipality: Village of Willowbrook



Project: Hotel Crime Reduction Program

1) Solution-driven:

The Village of Willowbrook identified a rising trend in criminal activities within hotel premises, including theft, prostitution, and overdoses, which were impacting local residents, hotel guests, and businesses. The Hotel Crime Reduction Program was implemented to tackle this issue head-on by developing a collaborative approach that involved law enforcement, hotel management, and community stakeholders. The program's core objective was to create a safer environment, thereby enhancing the reputation of local hotels and ensuring the safety of guests and residents alike.

2) Innovative:

The program introduced several innovative measures that set it apart from traditional crime prevention strategies:

- **Annual Inspections:** At least once a year staff from Community Development and the Police Departments inspect each hotel for building and law enforcement violations. An inspection of the hotels' records for length of stay and surveillance equipment is also reviewed. This enabled rapid response and the ability to identify patterns in criminal behavior.
- **Monthly Communication:** On a monthly basis, representatives from the Police Department engage with staff from each hotel to review crime trends and identify any visitors that may be near the 28-day stay limit.
- **Hotel Training:** Willowbrook introduced a voluntary training program for hotels that met specific safety and security standards, upgraded surveillance, and participated in regular security audits. Modeled after neighborhood watch programs, hotel staff were trained to recognize and report suspicious activities, working closely with the police department to enhance surveillance and crime prevention efforts.

3) Transferability:

The program's success lies in its adaptability to various municipalities facing similar challenges. By creating a model that integrates law enforcement with the hospitality industry, other municipalities can replicate the initiative with minimal adjustments. The use of existing technologies, like the camera surveillance technology, increased communication and adaptable training modules for hotel staff, makes the program easily transferable.

The Village adopted several ordinances in 2021 and 2023 that included the following actions:

In 2021, the Village Board approved the following upgrades to the hotel tax ordinance in an effort to help deter crime at hotels:

- Parking lot illumination and security requirements
- Video surveillance system requirements in common areas
- Restricted access or monitoring of public points of entry between 9 pm and 6 am

- Limiting the length of stay to 28 days, with exceptions made for corporate contracts and emergency situations
- Limiting room occupancy and congregation of occupants (exceptions for hospitality suites and other special circumstances)
- Curfew enforcement of juveniles in common areas

In 2023, the Village Board approved an ordinance to eliminate the language in the code that permitted any person who stayed past 30 days at a hotel to be exempt from local taxes.

4) Results-oriented:

Since the program's inception, the Village of Willowbrook has seen a significant decrease in hotel-related crimes:

- **Crime Reduction:** Below are the following reductions in property crimes, overdose calls, suicide calls, theft, domestic abuse, and other serious crimes
 - 2021: 27% reduction
 - 2022: 12% reduction
 - 2023: 23% reduction
- **Call Volume:** On an annual basis, the Village has seen a 23% decrease in call volume.
 - 2021: 35% reduction
 - 2022: 8% reduction
 - 2023: 23% reduction
- **Increased Revenue:** While there are other market-based factors in play, the Village reported the highest level of revenue for hotel and motel taxes in the Village's history.
 - 2021: \$230,228
 - 2022: \$421,200
 - 2023: \$423,264
- **Cost Efficiency:** The program was implemented with minimal financial investment, leveraging existing resources and fostering partnerships between the police department and local businesses. The reduction in crime has led to decreased emergency response costs and overtime expenses.

The Hotel Crime Reduction Program not only addressed a critical issue in Willowbrook but also laid the groundwork for sustainable community safety practices. This program serves as a model for other municipalities looking to tackle similar challenges, proving that innovative, collaborative approaches can yield significant benefits for public safety and economic vitality.