Business Improvement Districts

Not all partnerships have to be driven by law enforcement, or even include police participation. One prime example of a citizen-driven partnership is Business Improvement Districts (BID). These organizations are typically composed of area business owners and property owners who voluntarily come together and agree to impose special tax assessments on themselves. The funds are used to improve the area (Hoyt, 2005; MacDonald et al., 2010) and may pay for private security, CCTV, lighting, marketing, area repairs, graffiti removal, sanitation, or any other actions the BID views as a benefit. There are more than 1,000 BIDs in the United States, and they are an emerging trend in Europe (Cook and Ludwig, 2012).

Evaluations of BID generally show positive results, particularly in terms of lower crime. MacDonald et al. (2010) examined the activity and impact of 30 BIDs in Los Angeles. Looking at pre-post data for the target areas, the authors report a 12 percent decrease in robbery and an eight percent decrease in violent crime. The positive impact, however, is not uniform across all 30 BIDs. Brooks (2008) reports similar positive results in a separate evaluation in Los Angeles. Hoyt (2005), analyzing BIDs in Philadelphia, finds a significant reduction in property crime compared to non-BID areas. These results suggest that similar community partnership efforts have the potential to improve the community and reduce the level of crime.

References


