

Keeping a safe eye on Melbourne's entertainment precinct. Chapel Street Precinct's Community Safety Camera Program powered by Axis network cameras.



Organization:
Streets Ahead
Promotions, Inc.

Location:
Chapel St Precinct,
Melbourne, Australia

Industry segment:
City surveillance

Application:
Public surveillance

Axis partner:
EYefi Pty Ltd.

Mission

Streets Ahead Promotions, Inc. (SAPI) is a non-profit retail association for members (shop owners) in Chapel Street Precinct. A percentage of the rates paid to the City of Stonnington go into a marketing fund which is managed by SAPI. Roughly 1,000 members are covered by the SAPI ratable area, which stretches from Dandenong Road in the south to Toorak Road in the north, and from the train line on the west side to the businesses on the east side. Included in the 1,000 strong member group are The Jam Factory shopping and entertainment center, Prahran Central shopping center and Prahran Markets, along with many licensed premises, such as cafes, restaurants, clubs and bars.

The members of SAPI were growing concerned about some of the public safety issues they faced as an entertainment precinct and wanted to increase public safety and security in the Chapel Street Precinct of Prahran, deter crime and antisocial behavior and in turn increase proportional visitor spend in the area.

Solution

Streets Ahead Promotions, Inc. worked with the City of Stonnington, Victoria Police, and Axis Communications' partner EYefi to install an effective IP camera surveillance solution to monitor the entertainment precinct. Five AXIS 214 PTZ Network Cameras and a private wireless network were deployed, enabling the Prahran police to monitor the public spaces using EYefi's maps-based software.

Result

Victoria Police have provided hard and anecdotal evidence demonstrating the success of the system. There has been a significant increase in community confidence for their safety in the area, and the system has improved the allocation and deployment of local police officers as well. Even during peak times the cameras have helped make sure that police officers are deployed directly to the source of any disturbance. The camera recordings are also effective investigation tools and the content can, and has, been used in courts of law.

"It's visionary for a marketing body like Streets Ahead Promotions to take on this type of project. Provided by EYEfi as a fully managed service, the system has proved to be very effective so far and can be easily updated and expanded as required."

Simon Langdon, Managing Director of EYEfi.

Public safety top priority

SAPI's main role is to develop and implement marketing strategies for members, which includes managing events and festivals. As a managing body SAPI also provides a voice for members when dealing with the three tiers of government and also participates in the City of Stonnington Liquor Accord. Chapel Street Precinct is a designated entertainment precinct and SAPI's members have a responsibility to provide a safe environment. Throughout 2006, EYEfi worked closely with SAPI to scope out a solution that would meet the demanding requirements of Victoria Police within the Chapel Street precinct for the coming years.

In October 2006, EYEfi and SAPI finalized a proposal for the city of Stonnington to share the cost of running a Community Safety Camera Program in Chapel Street Precinct over a four-year period, as a fully managed service. The program's aims were to help improve public behavior on the streets, increase consumer safety in the precinct and assist Victoria police in quickly and effectively deploying its forces in the area.

Night and day operation for public safety

EYEfi installed a system featuring five AXIS 214 PTZ Network Cameras to monitor Chapel Street and its tributary roads, linked to a virtual private network from Prahran police station. Two cameras were set up on Chapel Street itself, while three other cameras were installed to monitor the joining roads, shopping centers and car parks in the vicinity. Given the complexities and diversities of Chapel Street Precinct, Victoria Police deemed it necessary to relocate one of the AXIS 214 PTZ cameras - and this was made possible by the easy installation and wireless capabilities of the camera system. As an entertainment venue with many evening and night events, SAPI required cameras that would perform well in low-light conditions and provide excellent color and black and white images. The AXIS 214 PTZ cameras were chosen for their reliability and ability to deliver high quality images during both day and night while also providing full pan, tilt and zoom capabilities.

The sergeant's office at Prahran police station is home to a dedicated workstation connected to a local EYEfi server at the Police Station. The EYEfi system is also connected to the broader Telstra EYEfi network that delivers other location-based spatial features to the system and also enables EYEfi to provide remote support and constant management of the system.

Police officers view and operate the camera network from a multi-screen maps based workstation that enables the police to track objects of interest with fast and high precision and the 18x optical motorized lens with auto-focus makes it possible to zoom in on distant or small objects with real clarity. AXIS 214 PTZ transmit simultaneous Motion JPEG and MPEG-4 images over the secure VPN and provide excellent detailed images down to 0.005 lux. The cameras also feature built-in motion detection so objects that enter the field of vision can be tracked without operator instruction, providing comprehensive real-time surveillance of the entertainment precinct.

Building community confidence

The cameras provide live and recorded images of the precinct's disturbance hotspots and have been successful in identifying criminal activity. The images present accurate information that enables the police to quickly send officers directly to the source of any disturbance. This, combined with the local signage informing the public of the camera's presence, has been effective in getting rid of the disruptive element from the area. The cameras can be deployed anywhere using wireless functionality and easy install features, offering extensive and detailed surveillance coverage. This has allowed the police to record specific initiatives such as vehicle road worthiness checks at well monitored locations, while the cameras have also been used in other independent investigations.

Victoria Police have noticed a clear improvement in public behavior in the precinct since the introduction of the surveillance system, with hard and anecdotal evidence showing that crime rates have dropped in the area. There has also been a considerable increase in community confidence that public safety and well-being in the area has improved.

