A Citizens Crime Mapping Case Study
In Berks County, PA, informed citizens equal safer streets

Even in the safest communities, crime happens. However, when we arm our citizens with knowledge of what is going on around them, alert and aware citizens can help reduce criminal activity in our neighborhoods. We see it time and time again that when the threat of crime is real, the public will take action. Think, for instance, of the frustrated shop owner who installs security cameras on his property after he has several items stolen from his store. Once those cameras are in place, they record the thief in action. The shop owner turns the evidence over to the police, and the burglar is taken off the streets. Or, think of the alert neighbor who informs the police after she sees two suspicious men prowling around her neighborhood, only to find out later that her tip helped to put two violent criminals behind bars.
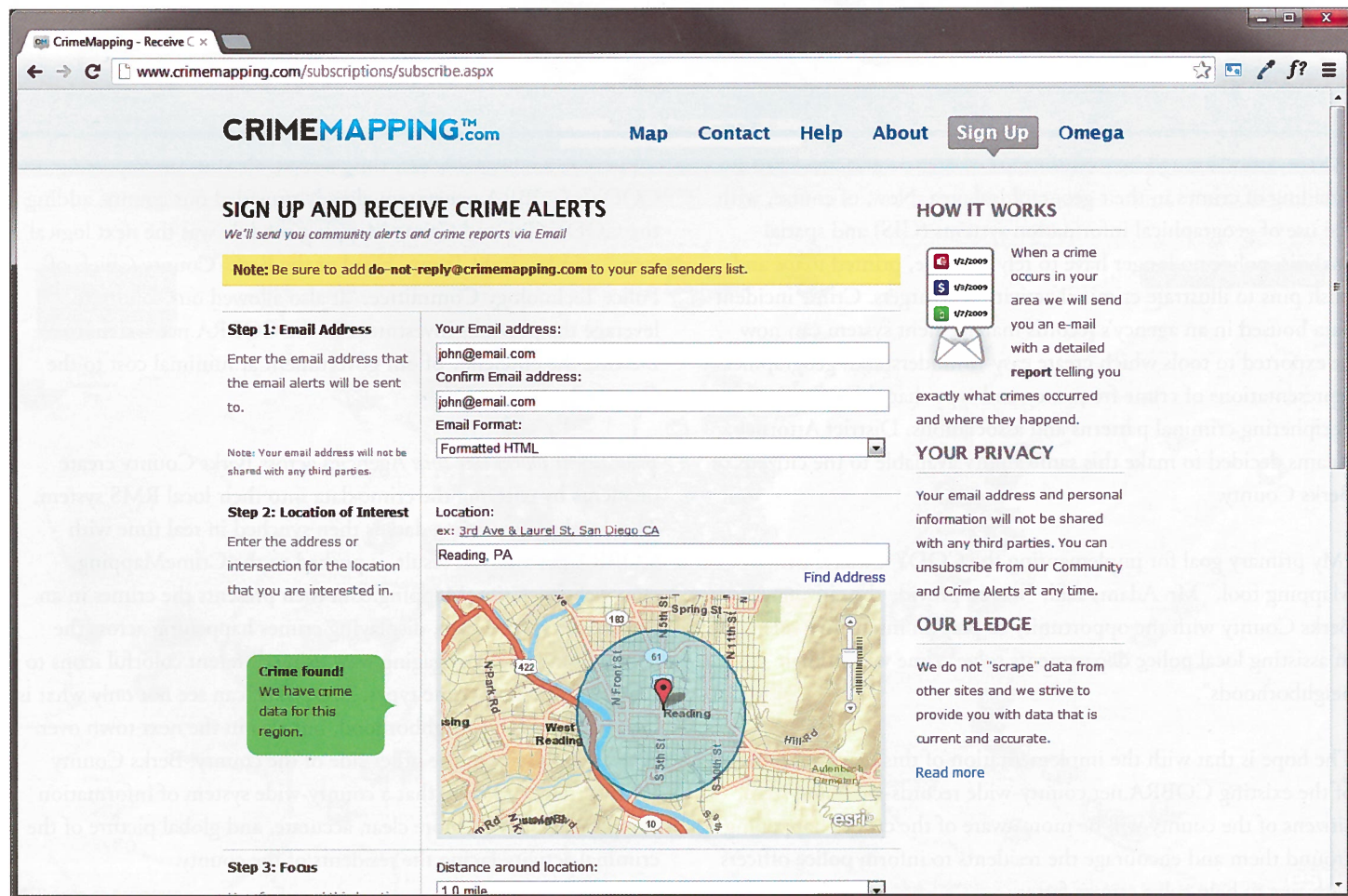
While we wouldn't expect them to take law enforcement into their own hands, citizens want to help. They also want to be informed. Departments and agencies across the nation are constantly looking for ways to increase not only public awareness of crime but also their interaction with police to help reduce it. One way to inform them is to make crime data available to them in an interesting,

engaging, and accessible way. That is why the District Attorney in Berks County, PA, Mr. John Adams, chose to purchase and implement a citizen's crime mapping tool, CODY Systems' Citizen Crime Mapping Module powered by The Omega Group's CrimeMapping.com, to enhance local community policing efforts by increasing citizen awareness of crimes happening throughout the county.

CrimeMapping.com™is a public-facing crime portal for citizens to better understand crime in their neighborhoods or city. This product module helps law enforcement agencies throughout North America provide the public with valuable information about recent crime activity through a Web browser. The Interactive Crime Mapping service enables users to explore their neighborhood or anywhere else in their community for crime activity information.
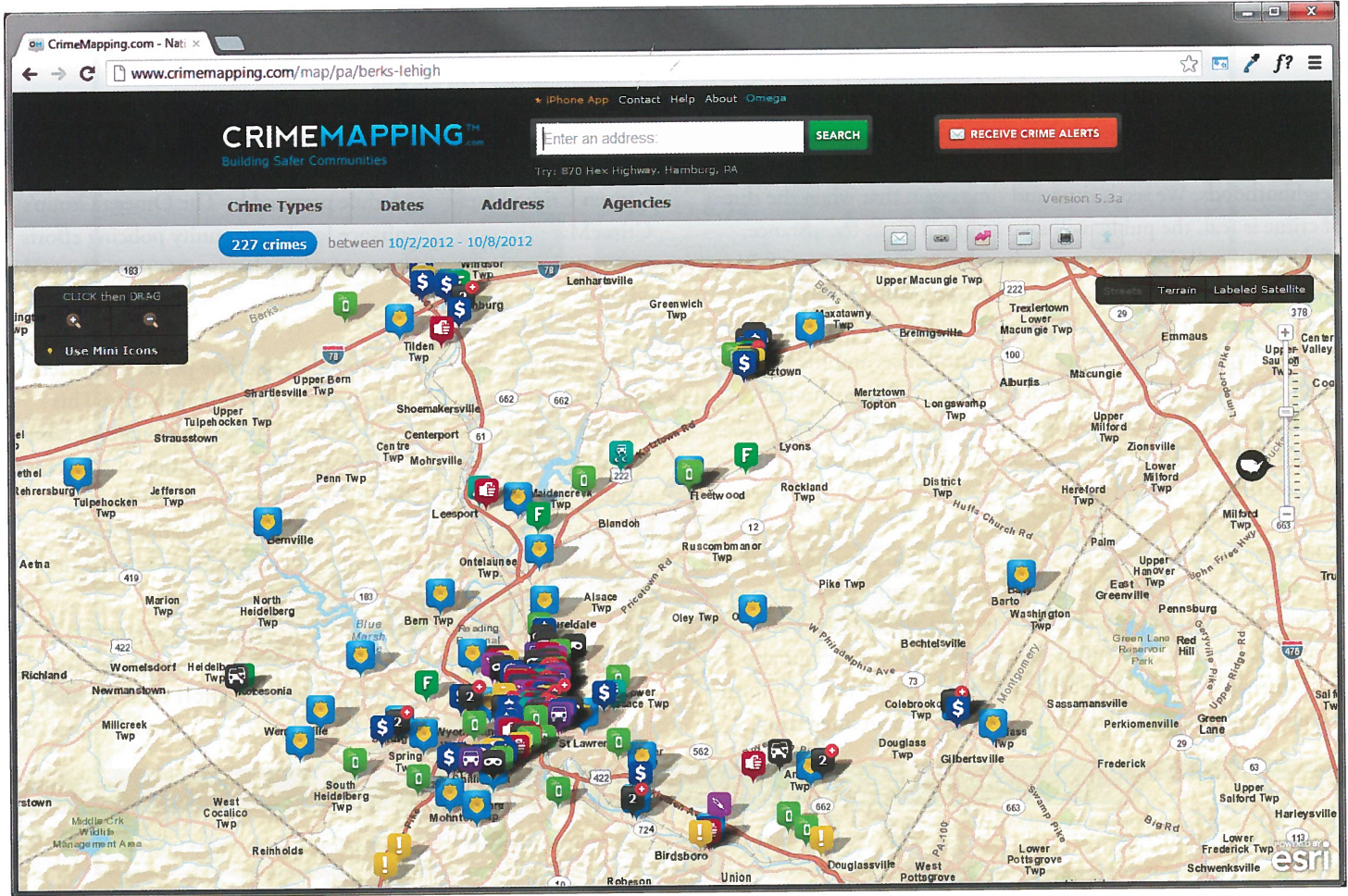
Using maps as visual aids to analyze crime incident patterns is nothing new. Police and investigators have been using maps for over a century to plot criminal activity in an effort to help police

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reduce crime through better-informed awareness and more precise detailing of crimes in their geographical area. Now, of course, with the use of geographical information systems (GIS) and spatial analysis, police no longer have to rely on large, printed maps and push pins to illustrate criminal activity and targets. Crime incident data housed in an agency's records management system can now be exported to tools which create easy-to-understand, geographical representations of crime frequency and type that aid police in deciphering criminal patterns and associations. District Attorney Adams decided to make this same ability available to the citizens of Berks County.

"My primary goal for implementing the CODY Citizen Crime Mapping tool," Mr. Adams said, "was to provide the citizens of Berks County with the opportunity to play an interactive role in assisting local police departments solve crime within their neighborhoods".

The hope is that with the implementation of this new tool on top of the existing COBRA.net county-wide records-sharing system, citizens of the county will be more aware of the crimes happening around them and encourage the residents to inform police officers with tips to help solve crimes faster.

"With the county-wide real-time records sharing and reporting that CODY's COBRA.net system already provided our county, adding the CODY Citizens' Crime Mapping module was the next logical step," said Lt. Todd Trupp, Head of the Berks County Chiefs of Police Technology Committee. "It also allowed our county to leverage the previous investment in the COBRA.net system to increase the efficiency of our government at minimal cost to the County."

Basically, it works like this: Agencies across Berks County create incidents by entering the crime data into their local RMS system. This local agency crime data is then synched in real time with COBRA.net and as a result, is pushed to the CrimeMapping. com website. CrimeMapping.com then presents the crimes in an online, interactive map, displaying crimes happening across the county in a visually engaging way, using different colorful icons to represent different crime types. The public can see not only what is happening in their neighborhood, but also in the next town over, or even the town on the other side of the county! Berks County PA is certainly proving that a county-wide system of information can provide a much more clear, accurate, and global picture of the criminal activity facing the residents of the county.

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Implemented in mid-September, access to CrimeMapping.com is already providing the citizens of Berks County with valuable information regarding crime activity by allowing them to view interactive maps, generate reports for specific types of crimes, specific time periods, and much more. CrimeMapping.com provides a whole host of methods for informing the public about crimes happening in their neighborhoods. Residents can generate reports for specific date ranges and crime types, view crime trend reports in colorful and engaging charts or graphs, sign up to receive customized crime alerts via email, and access Crime Alert Berks. In fact, according to The Omega Group, the Berks County DA's office has had close to 1000 subscribers to this service in only 2 months!

In fact, when discussing the most important reasons why the county should implement the system, District Attorney Adams cited the Crime Alerts feature as the most vital, saying, "The ability for subscribers to receive daily crime alert emails is, in my opinion, the best feature of the application".

The CODY Citizens Crime Mapping Module is powered by The Omega Group, a 20 year California-based company.   Omega's

CrimeView Enterprise Solution integrates big data, analytics, intelligence, interactive digital media visualizations and mapping to enable unprecedented precision policing workflows for the data-driven law enforcement agency.

Over the years, CODY and Omega have developed a key business partnership that allows CODY customers to reap the benefits of crime mapping at a fraction of the cost. At present, over 300 agencies across the nation are submitting data to CrimeMapping. com…and *over 10% of those agencies are right here in Pennsylvania!*

"By having this partnership between CODY and The Omega Group," commented Milan Meuller, President of The Omega Group, "we are able to provide Law Enforcement and the community with the best of both worlds – a top of the line digital, highly integrated Records Management System and a first class public-facing crime portal so that citizens can better understand crime in their neighborhoods."

For more information on the CODY Citizens Crime Mapping module, please contact CODY at 610.326.7476.