

Peek-a-Boo: Responses to Hidden Crime Places

John E. Eck, Ph.D.
School of Criminal Justice
University of Cincinnati

Tamara D. Madensen, Ph.D.
Department of Criminal Justice
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Sgt. Matt Hammer
Cincinnati Police Department

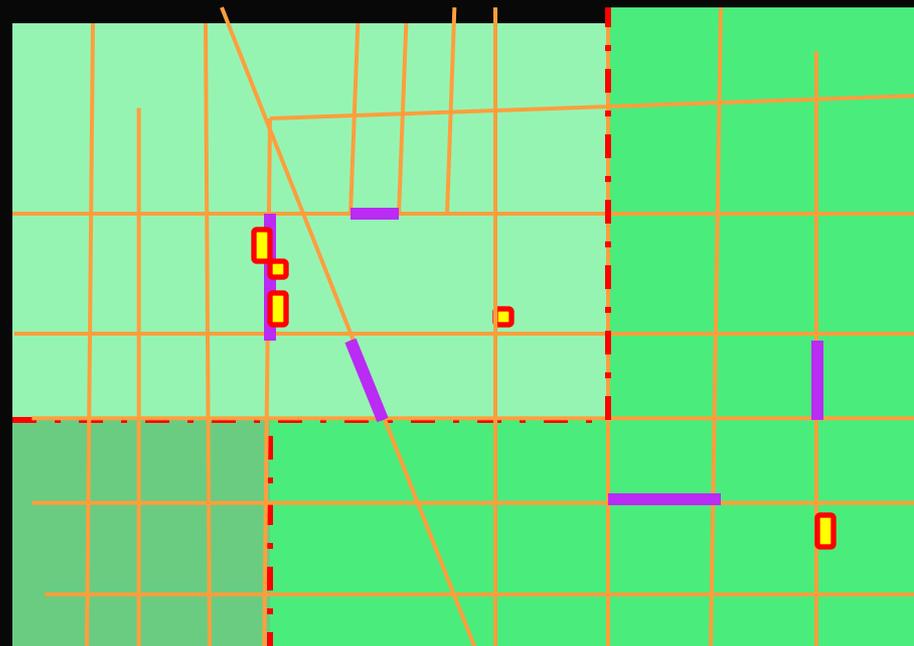
22nd Annual Problem-Oriented Policing Conference
October 10-12, 2011
Miami, FL

Overview

- Muddling through crime places
- Three forms of crime places – 3PP
- A typology of one form of crime place – 4CS
- 4CS and crime scripts – a generic framework.
- Other stuff

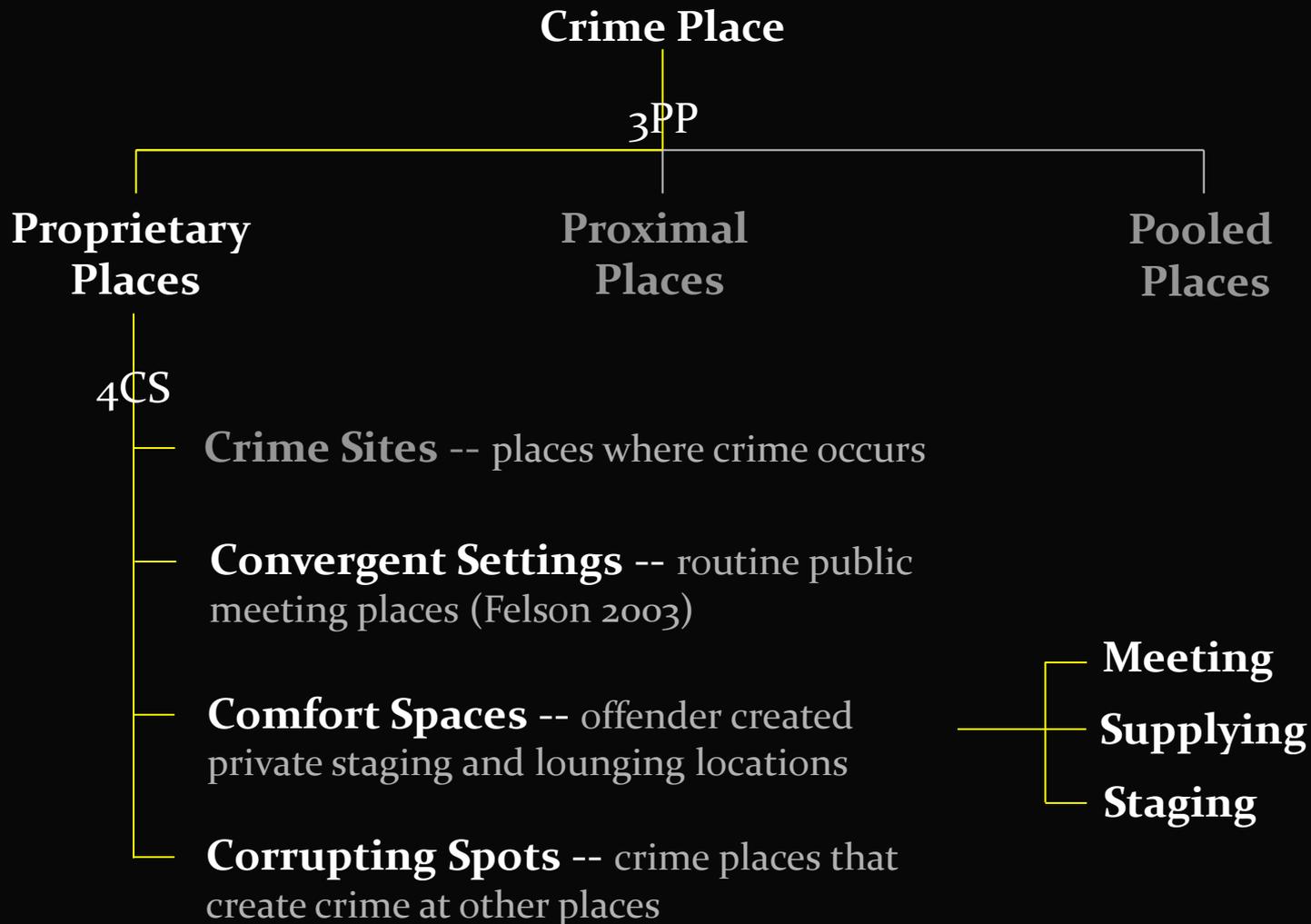
Concentration of Crime at Places – 3PP

- **Proprietary places** – addresses, buildings and other owned locations. Ownership is critical. 
- **Proximal places** – street segments and other small contiguous aggregations of proprietary places. 
- **Pooled places** – large aggregations of proprietary or proximal places, such as neighborhoods. 



Neighborhoods are comprised of streets and streets of proprietary places

Organization of Crime Places



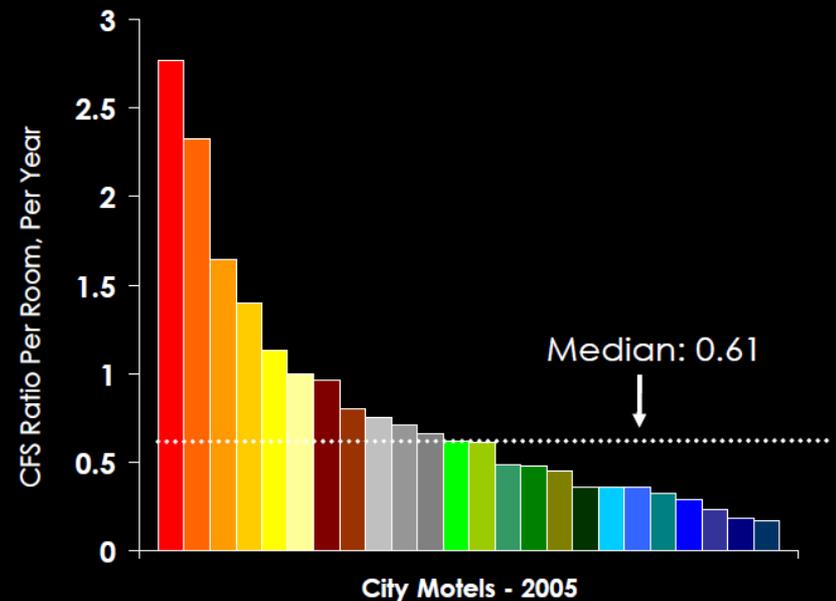
Crime Sites

- Repeat addresses – concentrations of crime at particular locations, and the spatial arrangement of these sites.



- Risky facilities – the distribution of crime within a set of proprietary places.

CFS Per Room, Per Year to Motels: 2005



Sources:

- Clarke & Eck, 2007. **Understanding Risky Facilities**, http://www.popcenter.org/tools/risky_facilities/
- Chula Vista Police, 2009. **Reducing Crime and Disorder at Motels and Hotels in Chula Vista, California** <http://www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2009/09-47%28W%29.pdf>

Convergent Settings

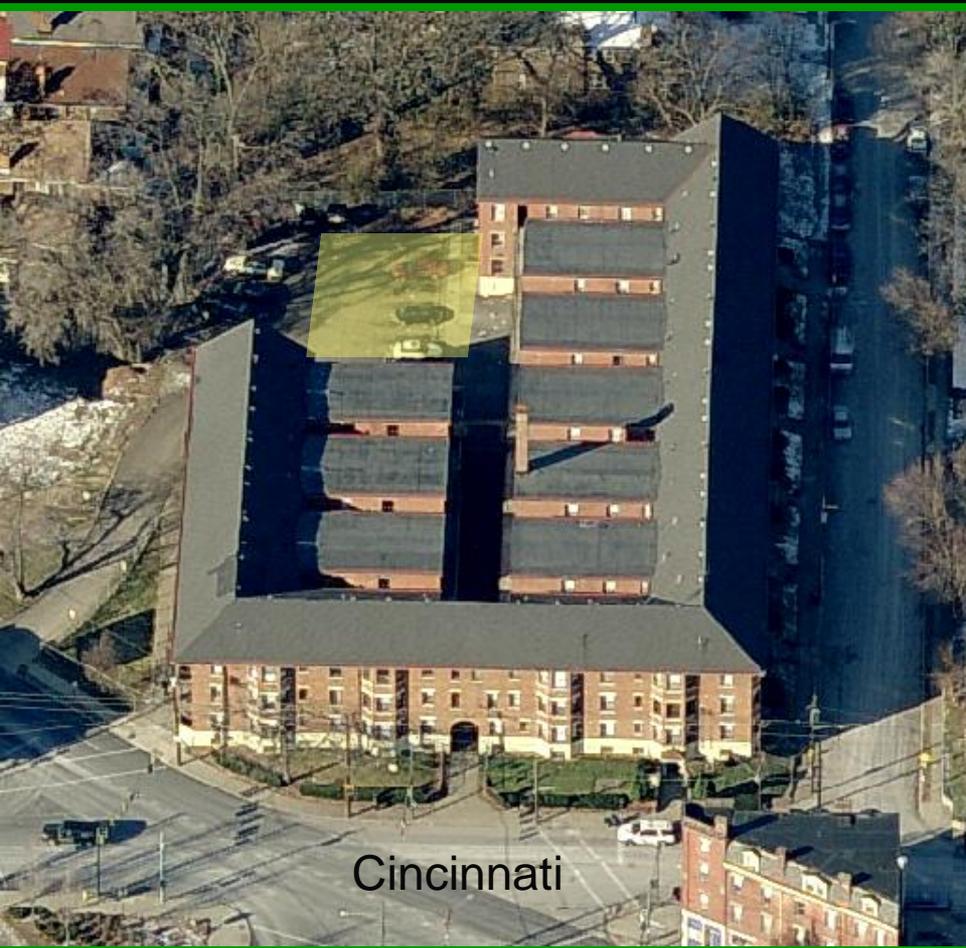
Felson (2003) suggested that some situations facilitate the meeting of potential offenders, and this can serve to create and maintain crime groups.

Since meetings among people require small spaces, convergent settings are proprietary or proximal places (but not pooled places).

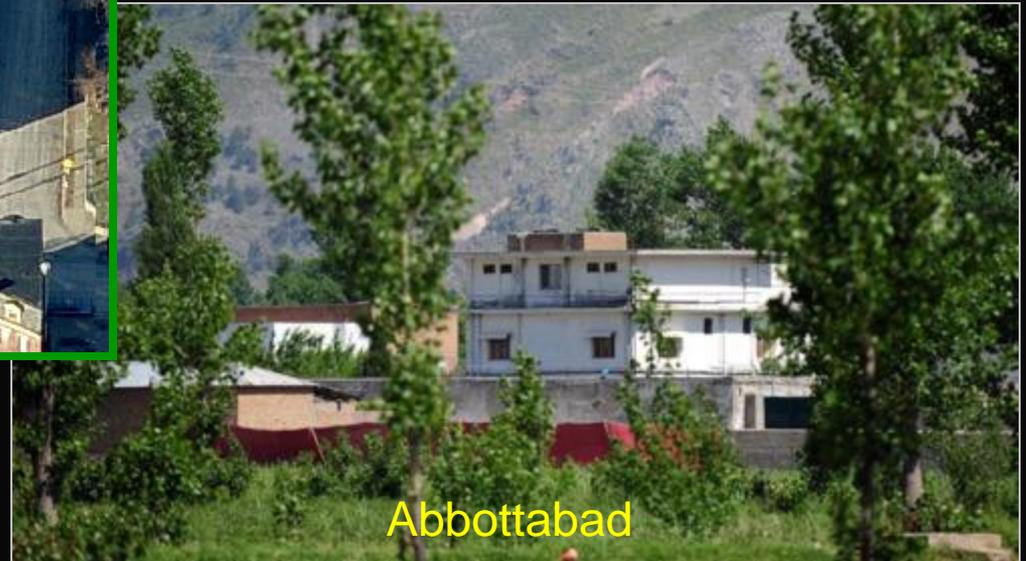


Comfort Spaces

Hammer (2011) claims that offenders use some places to routinely meet, provide recreation, stash tools and goods, and in other ways facilitate crime elsewhere. Offenders may avoid crimes at these locations to protect them from police intervention.



Cincinnati



Abbottabad

Forms of Comfort Spaces

- **Staging** -- provide safe haven in close proximity to customers and targets (and offending locations in general). They give an offender a space in which to observe neighborhood activities without great risk of apprehension by police.
- **Supplying** — stash location for supplying black market sites, often in close proximity to crime sites. May also stash goods stolen from crime sites.
- **Meeting** — provides a comfortable private place for offenders to meet and socialize.

Comfort Space Features

Concrete – cannot be changed by offender

- Geographic position
- Proximity to targets/offenders
- Defensible space
 - Sight lines
 - Height
 - Corner/Midblock

Variable – can be changed by offender

- Alcohol
- Superficial legitimacy
- Arrest prevention
- Hiding places for stuff
- Food, electricity, entertainment

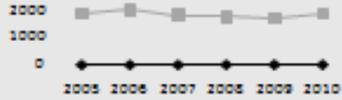
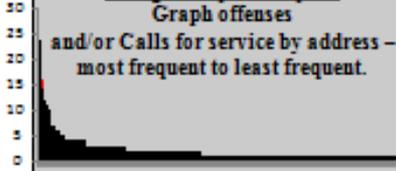
A Proposed Property Evaluation Template

Shows property

Shows geography of crime near property

Shows time sequence of crime of place and area

Shows relative frequency of crime at property compared to other properties in area

Property Evaluation Template (Offending/Staging/Supplying/ or Meeting) Neighborhood/Criminal Group/Address	
<p><u>Photograph of Property</u></p> 	<p>Describe the concrete characteristics of the property.</p>
<p><u>Crime Density Map</u> (include a relevant period – last 5 years) (review maps of before, during and after if property changed hands or uses)</p>	<p>Describe the variable characteristics of the property.</p>
<p><u>Time Series Analysis</u> Graph offenses and/or Calls for service comparing area trends to trends at location.</p> 	<p><u>Link 1 (Data Analysis):</u> Describe how visual data (map and graphs to left) support role of this property in area offending (trending in same direction, geographic relationship/change)</p>
<p><u>Frequency Analysis</u> Graph offenses and/or Calls for service by address – most frequent to least frequent.</p> 	<p><u>Link 2 (Human Intelligence):</u> Describe other data (human intelligence, etc.) which supports the theory of how this property is being used.</p>

Describes hard or slow to change characteristics of property

Describes changeable characteristics of property

Interprets charts & map on left linking property to crime

Summarizes human intelligence linking property to crime

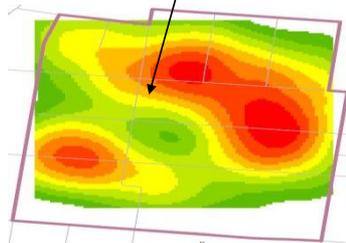
Examples of Staging Places

Appendix

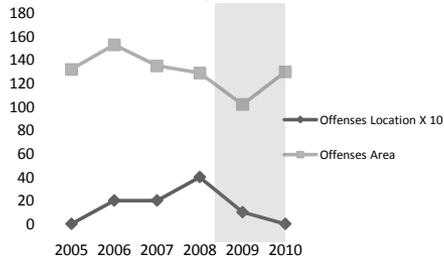
Figure 9



Apartment Building
Evaluated as: Staging Location



2010 Part I and II crime density in the immediate vicinity of evaluated location.



*Grey shading represents known time in operation



Total Part I and II offenses reported by location, 2005-2010

Source: Cincinnati Police Department, 2011

Concrete characteristics

- 1) Neighborhood dominance (located in criminal group territory)
- 2) High traffic area/known drug corridor (proximity to victims and customers)
- 3) Defensible (on corner, excellent sightlines, building high in relation to area)

Variable characteristics

- 1) Alcohol not present (bootleg alcohol joint established nearby)
- 2) Superficial legitimacy (tenant offenders, property rights)
- 3) Ability to prevent apprehension (offenders in control)
- 4) Hiding places for weapons, drugs (offenders in control)
- 5) Basic comforts (within, market on site)

Link 1: Data Analysis:

Location is in close proximity to hot-spots of offending, but not in the center. Trend analysis is inconclusive. The location is not the site of greatest offending. Instead, it falls within the curve of active, but largely ignored locations.

Link 2: Human Intelligence:

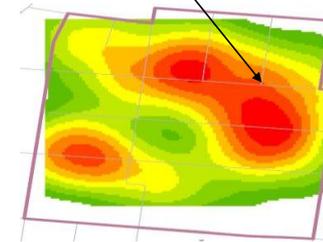
Officers observed offenders frequent the location, loiter nearby, and return to the building's safety when police got too close.

Appendix

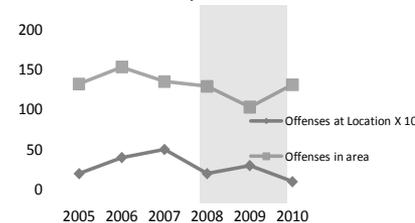
Figure 10



House
Evaluated as: Staging Location



2010 Part I and II crime density in the immediate vicinity of evaluated location.



*Grey shading represents known time in operation



Total Part I and II offenses reported by location, 2005-2010

Source: Cincinnati Police Department, 2011

Concrete Characteristics

- 1) Neighborhood dominance (located in criminal group territory)
- 2) High traffic area/known drug corridor (proximity to victims and customers)
- 3) Defensible (on corner, excellent sightlines, exits into a tree-line)

Variable Characteristics

- 1) Alcohol not present (bootleg alcohol joint established nearby)
- 2) Superficial legitimacy (tenant offenders, property rights)
- 3) Ability to prevent apprehension (offenders in control of structure)
- 4) Hiding places for weapons, drugs (offenders in control of structure)
- 5) Basic comforts (within, market nearby)

Link 1: Data Analysis

Located in the fringe of a hot-spot of dense criminal activity. Offending trends are inconclusive. Relatively high number of offenses reported at this location, but it does not rise to the top of repeat offending, even when measured against a relatively small geographic unit.

Link 2: Human Intelligence

Officers became aware that offenders would use the location to assist in evading apprehension, and often saw those involved in criminal activity at or near the location.

Examples of Supply Places

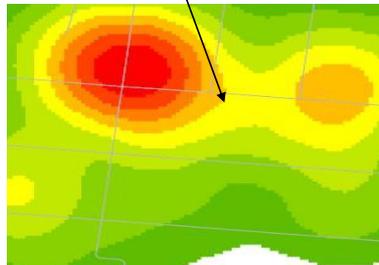
Appendix

Figure 13

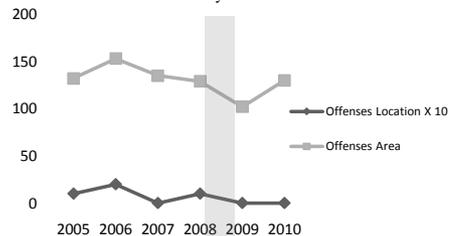


House

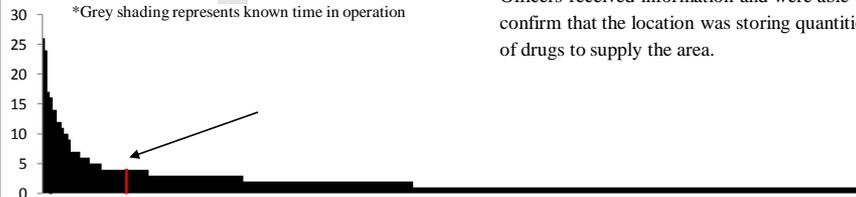
Evaluated as: Supply Location



2008 Part I and II crime density in the immediate vicinity of evaluated location.



*Grey shading represents known time in operation



Total Part I and II offenses reported by location, 2005-2010

Source: Cincinnati Police Department, 2011

Concrete Characteristics

- 1) Neighborhood dominance (located in criminal group territory)
- 2) High traffic area nearby (close proximity to known drug corridor)
- 3) Defensible (reasonable sightlines, similar to nearby structures)

Variable characteristics

- 1) Alcohol not present (alcohol joint established nearby)
- 2) Superficial legitimacy (tenant offenders, property rights)
- 3) Ability to prevent apprehension (offenders in control of structure)
- 4) Hiding places for weapons, drugs (offenders in control of structure)
- 5) Basic comforts (within, nearby market)

Link 1: Data Analysis

Offending in moderate proximity as site provides supplies to offending location. Low number of offenses at address, but high number in immediate vicinity. Offenses in area decrease after place closes (vertical lines represent known time of operation).

Link 2: Human Intelligence

Officers received information and were able to confirm that the location was storing quantities of drugs to supply the area.

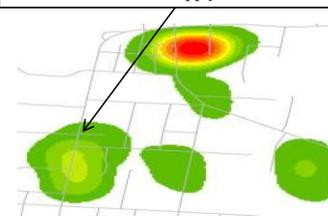
Appendix

Figure 14

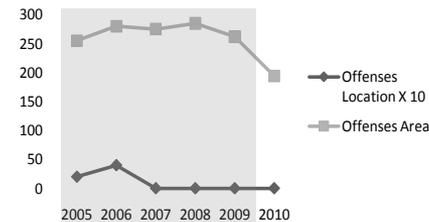


Market

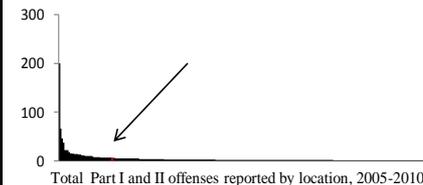
Evaluated as: Supply Location



2005-2010 Part I and II crime density in the immediate vicinity of evaluated location.



*Grey shading represents known time in operation



Total Part I and II offenses reported by location, 2005-2010

Source: Cincinnati Police Department, 2011

Concrete Characteristics

- 1) Neighborhood dominance (activity in area, but territory is not clearly defined)
- 2) Some drug activity in the area (proximity to victims and customers)
- 3) Defensible (multiple means of escape)

Variable characteristics

- 1) Alcohol nearby
- 2) Superficial legitimacy (barricade inside, brush,)
- 4) Hiding places for weapons, drugs (brush and inside building)
- 5) Basic comforts (within)

Link 1: Data Analysis

Although the site had no reported offenses at the location for 4 years, the substantial drop in area crime appears to match information which suggests it is no longer being used in the same way.

Linking the Place to the Crime

Very little human intelligence was available until after allegations surfaced that weapons were being sold at the location.

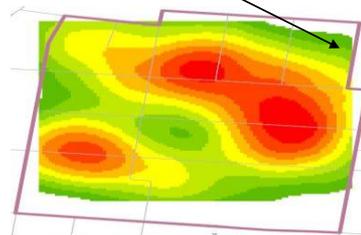
Examples of Meeting Place

Appendix

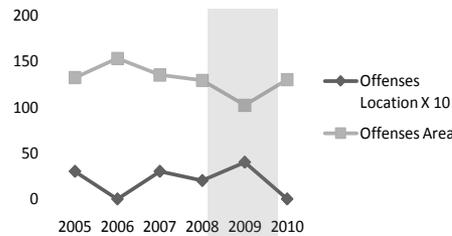
Figure 15



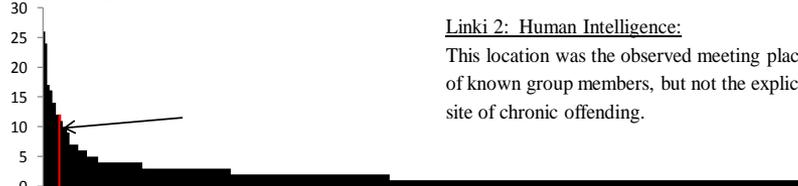
House
Evaluated as: Meeting Location



2010 Part I and II crime density in the immediate vicinity of evaluated location.



*Grey shading represents known time in operation



Total Part I and II offenses reported by location, 2005-2010

Concrete characteristics

- 1) Neighborhood dominance
(located in criminal group territory)
- 2) High traffic area/known drug corridor
(proximity to victims and customers)
- 3) Defensible (barricade)

Variable characteristics

- 1) Alcohol nearby
- 2) Superficial legitimacy
- 3) Ability to prevent apprehension
(barricade inside, brush,)
- 4) Hiding places for weapons, drugs
(brush and inside building)
- 5) Basic comforts
(within)

Link 1: Data Analysis:

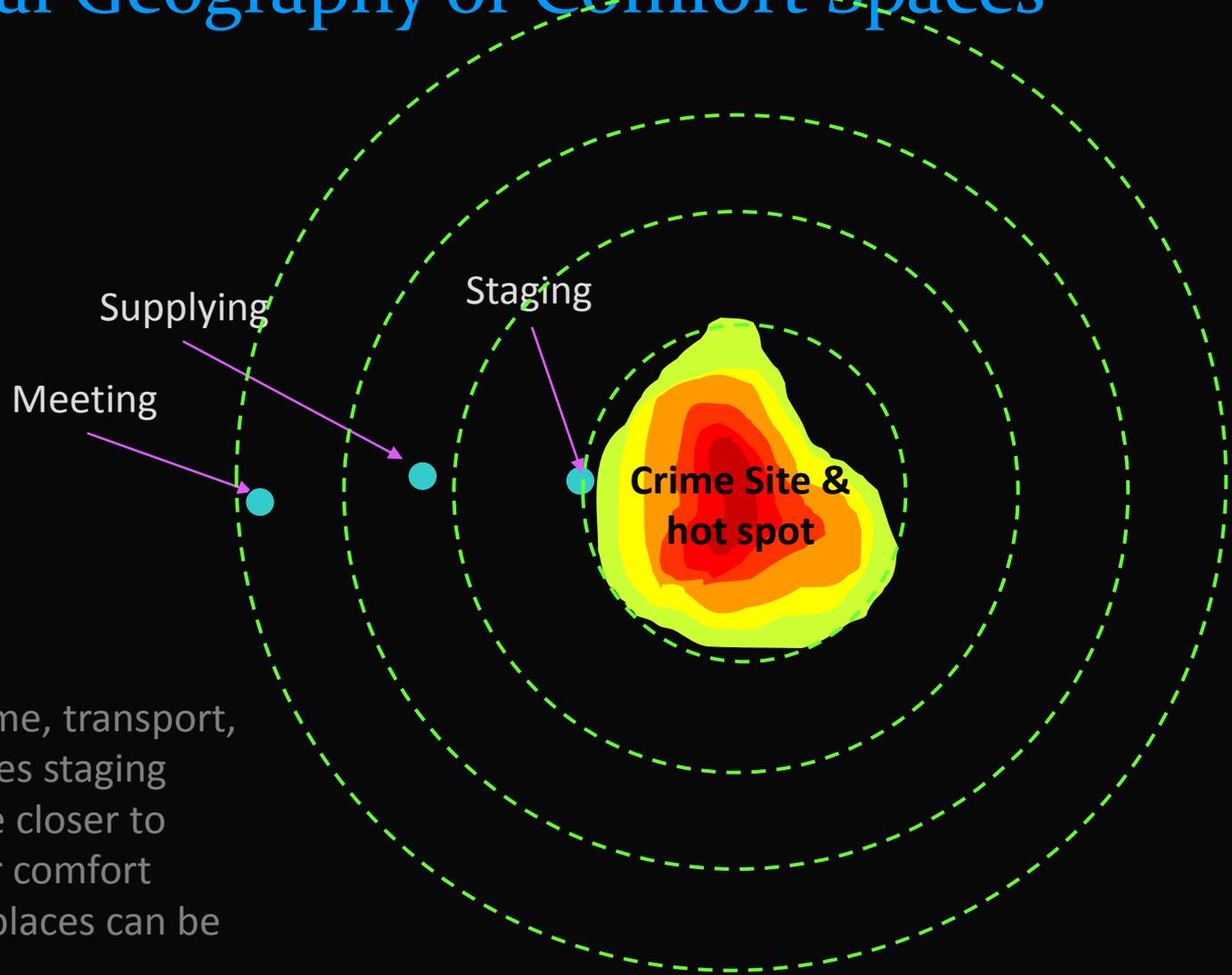
Crime may be geographically distant from meeting location, and the relationship between offenses at the location and offenses in the area may be less clear, as the location has a more diffused role in offending. In this case, some offenses were reported at the location (including two burglary victimizations), and the police became aware of the spot. Both of these factors may have led to its discontinued use.

Link 2: Human Intelligence:

This location was the observed meeting place of known group members, but not the explicit site of chronic offending.

Source: Cincinnati Police Department, 2011

General Geography of Comfort Spaces



Depending on the crime, transport, and local circumstances staging places may have to be closer to crime sites than other comfort spaces, and meeting places can be located further away.

Corrupting Spots

Corrupting spots support transactions that facilitate crime elsewhere. Two examples of corrupting spots for metal theft are shown here. Though crime occurs in these spots, its consensual so is not reported.



Cincinnati -- Cincy Recycling owner being arrested on six charges of failing to keep records.

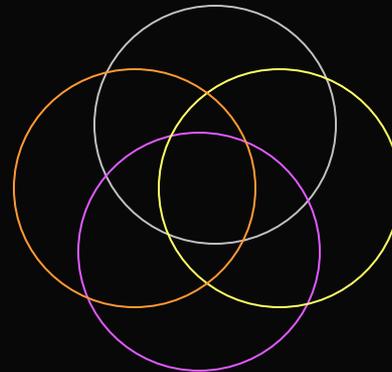
Summary of Proprietary Places

	Physical Description	Example
Crime Sites	An address, building, or land parcel with a great deal of crime	A high crime convenience store
Convergent Settings	A place where potential offenders routinely meet	A transit hub
Comfort Settings	A place offenders use as a safe house, stash site, or for private meetings	An offender rents an apartment and uses it as a club house for other members of his group
Corrupt Spots	A place that promotes crime at other places	A metal recycling business

Mixed Use Proprietary Places

(e.g., a drug dealing site outside a corner store)

- **Crime Site** -- repeat dealing and assaults
- **Convergent Setting** – gathering spot for young men
- **Comfort Space** – hangout at back of store
- **Corrupting Spot** -- prompting street robberies nearby



Proprietary Places have Different Roles in Crime Processes

	Long Before	Just Before	During	After
Convergent Setting	X	X	X	X
Comfort Space	X	X		X
Meeting	x	x		x
Supplying	x	x		x
Staging		x		
Corrupting Spot	X			X
Crime Site			X	

If we focus solely on crime sites, we ignore other stages of the crime process.

Crime Places and Copper Theft

Crime Sites →

Copper condensing
air-conditioning units



Light/telephone poles &
power stations



Vacant/foreclosed
properties



Churches

Picture Sources

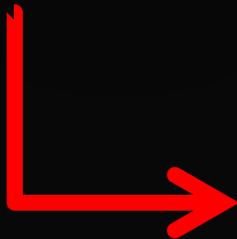
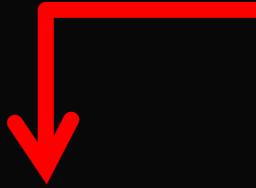
- <http://www.callthiele.com/news/072208-thiele-introduces-warning-watchdog.htm>
- <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-crowd-is-back-into-commodities-copper-theft-is-back-2009-11>
- <http://mareinet.com/2011/01/30/stop-copper-theft-open-letter-to-the-law-makers/>
- <http://www.aikenstandard.com/>
- <http://www.hubbardtwppd.org/Safety%20Tips/catalytic.htm>

Crime Places and Copper Theft

What we see

What we don't see

Crime Sites



Comfort Space



Staging location
where offenders park & meet close to crime sites

Comfort Space



Supplying location
where metal is stored

Corrupting Spot



Recycling Plant



Convergent Setting

extra cash and removal of your recycle items - S1 (valley wide pick up)

Date: 2011-10-03, 10:13AM PDT
Reply to: see below

i will buy and haul off your unwanted junk such as any metal and recycle items, batterys, old car parts, cans please call 702

craigslist



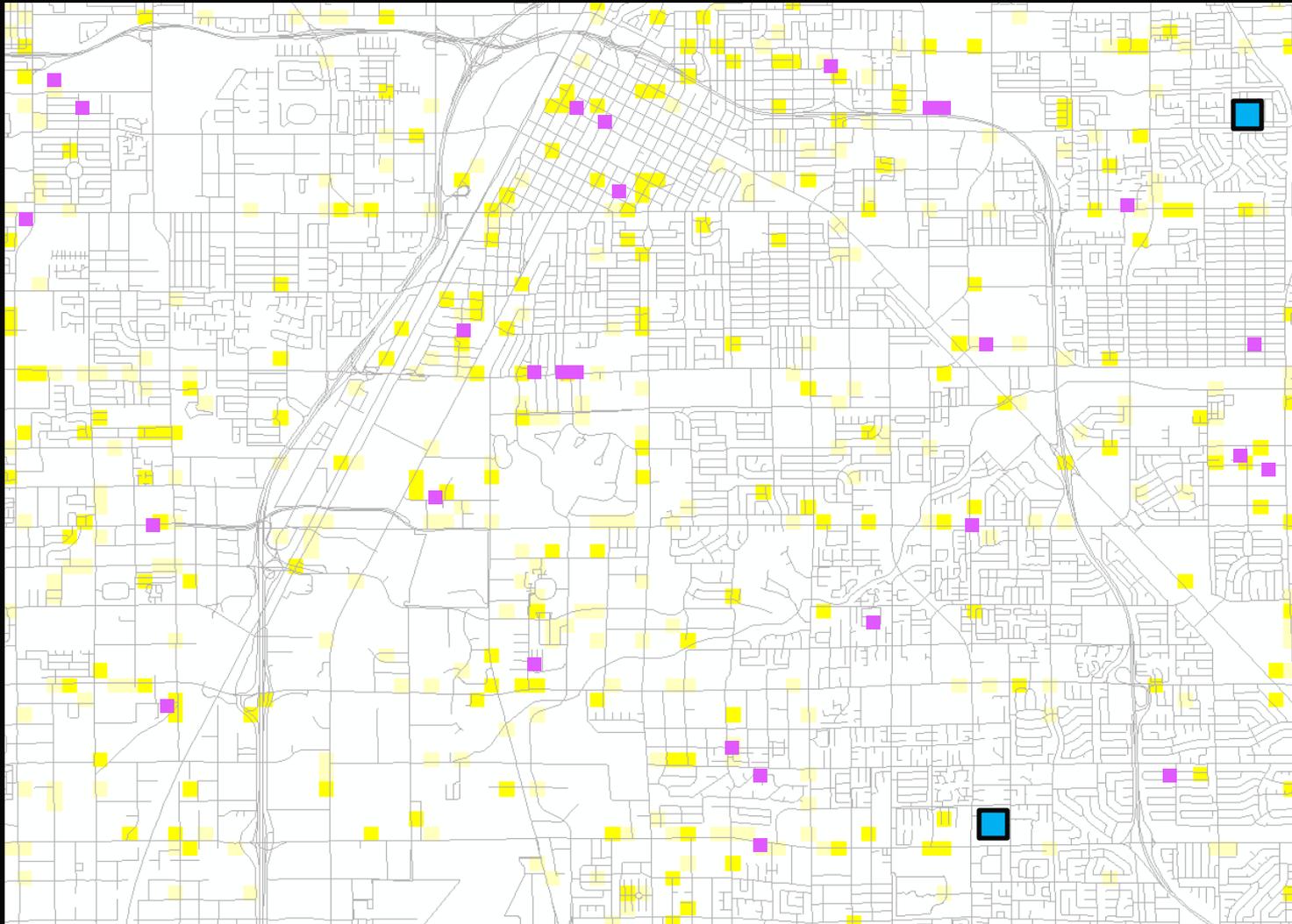
Crime Hotspot Map

■ Crime Sites

■ Comfort Spaces

■ Convergent Settings

■ Corrupting Spots



— ■ —
Single virtual location

Conclusions

- Visibility and place detection – we detect the most obvious crime places.
- Qualitative research – large scale database mining is probably less useful than direct observation.
- Higher bar for intervention – the less directly involved a site is in crime, the more difficult it will be to prevent crime at that site.

Definitions of Places (3PP)

A **proprietary place** is an address (physical or virtual), building, or other form of property parcel. The most meaningful distinction between proprietary and other types of places is that most proprietary places have distinct owners. Owners are important because they have legal authority over the functioning of their places.

Proximal places are small groups of proprietary places clustered relatively close in space (in the physical world and virtual world). These places contain multiple owners, but no owner has full control over the entire proximal place. Spatial immediacy may allow one proprietary place to impact crime at another within a specific proximal place.

Pooled places are higher levels of proprietary place aggregation. The boundaries of such places are usually selected in a highly arbitrary manner. All that can be said about this larger collection of proprietary places is that the places within them share some characteristic that may or may not be relevant for understanding crime within these areas (e.g., they are all located within the same city, neighborhood, housing tract, or census block).

Definitions of Proprietary Places (4CS)

A **crime site** is a proprietary place where crimes occur. Typically we are interested in crime sites that have multiple crimes, and far more than other similar proprietary places.

A **convergent setting** is a proprietary or proximal place that facilitates the meeting of potential offenders who might not know each other. Unlike meeting comfort spaces, offenders usually have little or no control over these places and often provide limited privacy to offenders. Importantly, convergent settings have important legitimate uses and typically serve mostly non-offenders. Offenders make use of the legitimate functions of these places for their own ends.

Comfort spaces are usually proprietary places offenders use to help carry out their criminal activity. They can serve as meeting, supplying or staging locations. Unlike convergent settings, offenders exercise some control over the functioning of the place.

Corrupting Spots are proprietary places that support transactions that stimulate offenders to commit crimes at other places. The most obvious corrupting spots are places used by criminal receivers and others who purchase stolen goods. Some drug dealing spots can be considered corrupting.

References

Felson, M. 2003. "The Process of Co-offending." In Martha J. Smith and Derek B. Cornish, eds. *Theory for Practice in Situational Crime Prevention*. Monsey, NY: Crime Prevention Studies.

Hammer, M. 2011. "Crime Places of Comfort." Unpublished Masters Demonstration Project paper. Cincinnati, OH: University of Cincinnati, School of Criminal Justice.

Madensen, T.D. and J. E. Eck. Forthcoming. "Crime Places and Place Management." in Cullen and Wilcox, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*. New York, Oxford University Press.