



*Conferences that Inspire Solutions*

## **Maintaining Effective Law Enforcement in Growth Communities**

### **Key Takeaways from Jason Soto's Session**

In just two year's time, Racine County will be home to an advanced manufacturing campus overseen by the world's largest electronics manufacturer. Based in Taiwan, Foxconn produces an extensive assortment of electronics for an ever-expanding list of clients, which includes iconic brands like Apple, Nokia, and Microsoft. Thousands of new employment opportunities, renewed interest in the area, and increased wages are just a few of the changes the company is expected to bring to our community.

With Foxconn soon opening its doors, Racine is about to become a much busier place. In light of the many employment opportunities the company will be offering, the county's population is expected to grow exponentially. While this will prove beneficial to the local economy in a number of ways, population growth also creates a greater demand for public services – most notably, law enforcement. As Reno's police force discovered in the wake of Tesla's arrival, a sudden avalanche of growth can present an assortment of challenges for a resource-light department. However, by making the most of existing resources and implementing outside-the-box solutions, our law enforcement agencies can tackle these issues head-on and work towards building a community in which every resident feels secure.

Budgetary constraints are one of the biggest challenges facing police departments in rapidly-expanding communities. Many of these departments are forced to work with budgets that don't reflect the expanded sizes of their respective cities. Further complicating matters is the fact that service calls and criminal incidents are bound to increase as a community gets larger. To effectively deal with this influx of new activity, departments need to get creative with their budgets. For example, prioritizing the hiring of non-sworn officers – that is, officers with limited legal powers – can save departments a considerable sum and alleviate some of the burden placed on sworn officers. While sworn officers – that is, officers who carry guns and make arrests - are

crucial to maintaining the safety of any community, non-sworn officers can prove helpful in issuing tickets, composing reports, patrolling key areas, and increasing overall efficiency.

Community engagement, a core tenet of any successful police department, is particularly important in cities undergoing massive growth. This means sending representatives to local symposiums, neighborhood meetings, and community centers and having them reach out to those in attendance. This type of engagement can help departments build trust with minority communities and young people and encourage them to play an active role in public safety. Forming partnerships with nonprofits and faith-based institutions is another effective way to connect with residents and spread your message. Consistent community engagement can also get people to participate in volunteer policing programs like Neighborhood Watch. Reno, for example, boasts a sizable volunteer unit – one that’s primarily composed of senior citizens – that has proven invaluable in identifying and reporting minor crimes. Additionally, decentralizing police operations and opening substations in key areas is a great way to improve response times and keep criminal activity at bay.

In order to combat rising crime rates in a growing community, police departments need to get proactive. In addition to consistently patrolling high-activity areas, this entails regular communication with neighboring departments and law enforcement agencies across the region. Not only will sharing important data with other departments prove beneficial to stamping out crime in specific communities, it can have a dramatic impact on criminal activity throughout the state. Through leveraging regional partnerships, the Reno P.D. has seen a 400% increase in felony arrests and a 500% increase in gun recoveries over the last five years. Such partnerships can also prove essential in curbing the human trafficking found in most rapid-growth communities. Decentralizing police operations and opening substations in key areas can also lead to substantial decreases in various types of crime.

In every community, residents have a general expectation of public safety. However, few people outside of law enforcement realize how challenging upholding the peace can be when a department is operating with limited resources. Although maintaining an effective police force with budgetary constraints can be difficult, it’s by no means impossible. Implementing creative staffing solutions, engaging with members of the community, and partnering with neighboring departments will go a long way in keeping the peace, regardless of how much Racine’s population expands.