

**Spotlight on Public/Private
Initiatives**

The Atlanta Downtown
Improvement District

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Public/Private Partnership: A Core Strategic Initiative

The Security Executive Council develops its strategic initiatives in response to member input, focusing on the needs members have identified as they lead security programs in their enterprises. One of the council's core strategic initiatives is Public/Private Partnership.

Of course, one of the most important benefits of partnership between the corporation and the public sector falls under the umbrella of business continuity. A strong relationship between these two entities will help ensure that in an emergency, the private-industry security team is ready to work quickly and effectively with law enforcement and public agencies to provide the best response to protect both the organization and the citizenry.

However, the importance of these relationships extends well beyond business continuity. The well-managed public/private partnership provides opportunities not only for effective emergency management, but for information sharing, risk mitigation and return on investment for the corporation.

That's why SEC the members featured in this series of short Spotlights have put so much effort into developing and maintaining exemplary public/private partnerships in their regions and nationwide. Not only is it the right thing to do, it's yet another way to position security as a boon to the business.

THE ATLANTA DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT ATLANTA, GA

Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), a private, not-for-profit corporation made up of representatives of Downtown Atlanta's top business leaders, has been working since 1941 to continually improve the economic climate of the Downtown area. In the past five years alone they've launched several programs to beautify Downtown and assist and protect visitors, tenants and residents, and they've developed Imagine Downtown, a multi-tiered redevelopment plan for the area. Recognizing that safety, cleanliness and hospitality are fundamental factors in community improvement, CAP founded the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District in 1995. ADID is a public-private partnership that strives to enhance public safety and public works services within the 220-block district.

The ADID's operational component is the Ambassador Force Program, which includes the 65-member Ambassador Force, the Clean Team—an 18-person contract staff—and the Public Works Supervisor, who supervises the Clean Team and oversees public works and infrastructure-related actions.

The ADID Ambassador Force

The Ambassador Force provides public safety and customer service to Downtown Atlanta's daily constituency and visitors. Ambassadors patrol the district in uniform, each wearing a pith helmet while walking one of the 21 beats or staying at static posts. Some Ambassadors ride Segways or bicycles, which gives them an air of authority and makes them easily identifiable. An Ambassador provides hospitality and customer service by providing directions, acting as an escort when needed, and doling out information on the local area and businesses. The Information Booth they operate in the middle of Downtown has proven exceptionally beneficial to Atlanta conventioners and visitors. Ambassadors also provide a sense of public safety and deterrence.

Ambassadors maintain direct communications with the Atlanta Police Department on their individual radios, allowing them to report violations of law or suspicious activity, and they have at least one off-duty Atlanta Police Officer working with them at all times. The off-duty police officer always provides a dedicated resource for selective enforcement initiatives, usually focused on quality of life or nuisance crimes. He or she has a dedicated public safety vehicle that is emergency equipped for visibility and emergency response, including first aid, defibrillator, and communications. The Ambassadors work closely with the Atlanta Police in a number of programs.

Crime Prevention

The Ambassadors work with police to advise constituents of crime prevention methods. They evaluate their operational methods and resource deployment based on criminal data they receive from the police. They conduct Town Hall meetings with crime briefings semi-annually with the senior Police leadership to describe the crime status within the district, and they coordinate the Public Safety Task Force, involving the police leadership, business and civic leaders. The Ambassadors also coordinate and participate in monthly Interagency Law Enforcement partnership meetings that coordinate enforcement initiatives, special event support, and emergency preparedness.

Wake-Up and Stay-Up

Off-duty police officers work alongside the Ambassadors in the Wake-Up and Stay-Up programs, which are intended to get the homeless who choose to urban camp or criminal trespass on

private property to move into shelters. The secondary intent is to reduce the negative or unsafe perception that people sleeping on the street presents. Social workers often accompany the details to provide assessment and referral assistance. These programs operate in the early morning and late night 7 days per week, and have proven to be very successful.

Operation Shield

Through Operation Shield, the ADID also partners with the Atlanta Police Department and the Police Foundation. Operation Shield includes a camera surveillance program, COMNET Program (public private police frequency use and training program), and AtlantaCityWorkSite.

The ADID provided the cameras and installation, and the police department provided the signal. Ambassadors assist police in monitoring, and they provide the 24/7 dedicated police response to both the Downtown ADID cameras, as well as suspicious or criminal sightings from other constituent cameras.

COMNET is a radio voice communications program that up until recently was co-managed with the police for maintaining a police frequency where private-sector members could communicate directly to a police dispatcher, as well as laterally to other members. The police train dispatchers and private security personnel in various areas, such as patrolling, legal limitations and liability, communications, and emergency actions procedures. In an effort to expand the program city-wide effectively, the police foundation has now assumed the management responsibility.

Recently the partnership also added a technology component to the program, AtlantaCityWorkSite (available commercially via Internet as CityWorkSite). This is a Web-based information-sharing platform that allows the police to instantly send alerts via a variety of means to its members. It also allows the download of streaming videos and distribution of photos. It provides various restricted/unrestricted talk groups, can be encrypted (exceeds DOD standards), and is a generally a coordination and incident management tool.

Emergency Preparedness

The Ambassador Force plays a key role in coordinating and supporting emergency preparedness and response operations in the Downtown area by serving as a base for communications to the Downtown constituency, assisting public safety agencies in identifying and reporting hazardous conditions, managing crowds, and supporting emergency evacuations. There are between 20 and 30 Ambassadors on duty at any time in a hierarchical organization. They maintain communications, are trained in emergency response procedures, and can readily be deployed or redeployed as needed. This was especially important during the tornado that unexpectedly struck Downtown Atlanta in March 2008. The Ambassador Force played a key role in crowd management and assistance from the time the tornado struck through the following weeks of recovery.

Downtown Atlanta enjoys an outstanding working relationship between all public safety agencies working toward a common goal of keeping downtown clean, safe, and hospitable, with a bonus—the program has helped Downtown maintain one of the lowest crime rates in the city.

ABOUT THE SECURITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Security Executive Council (www.securityexecutivecouncil.com) is a member organization for senior security and risk executives from corporations and government agencies responsible for corporate and/or IT security programs. In partnership with its research arm, the Security Leadership Research Institute, the Council is dedicated to developing tools that help lower the cost of members' programs, making program development more efficient and establishing security as a recognized value center.