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Article Summary

Crime Attractors, Generators and Detractors: Land Use and Urban Crime Opportunities

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Summary

This study examines the idea of land use and its potential as crime attractors and generators with assault and motor vehicle thefts in a suburban community in Vancouver, BC, Canada. The authors argue that land-use types can be major crime generators and attractors. The land types evaluated were residential (i.e., neighborhoods, parks, apartment complexes) and commercial (i.e., shopping centers, movie theaters, parking lots, restaurants) areas. The results showed that there was a similar pattern for assault and motor vehicle theft in residential areas closer to commercial land. Implications for this study include increasing research on crime and place and creating targeted land-type crime prevention strategies.

Methods

The research was conducted in the city of Burnaby, a suburb within Metro Vancouver, British Columbia. All motor vehicle thefts and assaults reported in 2005 were gathered from the RCMP Police Information Reporting System. The address of each offense was geocoded and resulted in 1,1172 spatially located assaults and 2,691 spatially located motor vehicle thefts. Land use data were acquired from the British Columbia Assessment Authority. The land data were categorized into six major categories: 1. Civic, Institutional, and Recreational; 2. Commercial; 3. Farm; 4. Residential; 5. Transportation and Industry; and 6. Utility. Crime density maps were created for both assault and motor vehicle theft crime types, displaying the patterns of crime in residential and commercial land use.

Results

The concentration for crime is the highest in the multi-use residential and commercial complexes in the south-western part of Barnaby. The pattern for motor vehicle theft is similar to the assault pattern with them both concentrating in residential areas closer to the commercial land; however, the motor vehicle thefts displayed more clusters. The total numbers of assaults and motor vehicle thefts are highest at residential land use because the city of Barnaby is mostly residential area. Notably, shopping centers had larger clusters of crime because of the unattended motor vehicles and greater civilian presence.

Implications

Bringing attention to the clustering of land-use types such as shopping centers, apartment complexes, and parks could provide a better guidance on where to implement crime prevention strategies. By examining the environment surrounding the land-types with heavier crime, the relation between crime and urban design can be better understood. The knowledge of demographics in commercial and residential areas could help law enforcement know where to deploy patrols to reduce the clustering of assaults and motor vehicle thefts.