Assessing the Impact of Gambling on Public Safety in Massachusetts Cities and Towns

Comparative Analysis of Crime in the Plainridge Park Casino Region

2010-2023

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Important note

This report was prepared for the Massachusetts Gaming Commission and Plainville-area police agencies by a contracted consultant. Although both the Commission and the chief executives of the agencies were allowed to review, comment, and offer alternate viewpoints, the final conclusions are the consultant's and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Gaming Commission nor the contributing police agencies.

Many statistics are offered in this report that show increases and decreases in certain categories in Plainville and surrounding communities. In all cases, when aberrations have appeared, I have done my best to analyze them and determine their cause. Until analyzed, statistics that indicate notable increases or decreases in activity are simply *indicators* worthy of further analysis, and not proof of any particular "cause" of the changes. **No statistic offered in this report should be taken, by itself, as proof of a casino relationship**.

The Effects of Casinos on Crime in a Community[1]

An Analytical Overview

Introduction

Crime and casinos have been extensively researched and publicly debated. Casinos are viewed as boosting local economies through tourism and job creation but may have the unintended consequences of increasing crime rates. These series of studies have been commissioned to more fully understand this complex interaction, specifically to understand the impact of crime on local communities.

Crime, as a social phenomenon has been studied from various perspectives. One of the most intriguing approaches to understanding crime and place, particularly crime around casinos, is to examine the spatial and environmental factors that might influence criminal behavior as a result of the casino being opened. Environmental Criminology examines how crime concentrates spatially and temporally (i.e., hotspots) as it relates to the physical environment. By understanding the relationship between crime and space, police departments can leverage Evidence Based Policing to develop more effective strategies for crime prevention and control.

Environmental criminology suggests that crime is not randomly distributed but is influenced by the characteristics of specific locations. Factors such as urban design, land use, and the presence of natural surveillance can significantly impact the likelihood of crime. For instance, poorly lit areas, isolated spaces, and neighborhoods with high levels of social disorganization are often associated with higher crime rates, called Social Disorganization Theory. By looking at these environmental factors, police departments, with the help of pracademics, can identify patterns and hotspots of criminal activity, and systematically develop targeted interventions and crime prevention strategies to address it.

Moreover, by going beyond the immediate physical environment, to include broader social and economic contexts; policy makers and leaders can allocate resources to counter the negative effects of casinos. Socioeconomic disparities, population density, and community cohesion are all critical factors that shape the spatial distribution of crime.

Theoretical Frameworks and Previous Studies

The research on the impact of casinos on crime rates is drawn from a variety of theories and disciplines.   Routine Activity Theory, for instance, posits that the presence of casinos increases opportunities for crime by attracting a large number of people, some of whom may be potential offenders. Social Disorganization Theory suggests that the influx of visitors and the transient nature of casino employees can disrupt local communities, leading to higher crime rates.

Economic Impact

One of the primary arguments in favor of casinos is their potential economic benefits. Casinos can create jobs, generate tax revenue, and stimulate local businesses. However, these economic gains can be offset by the costs associated with increased crime and the need for additional law

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[1] Parts of this Section (pp. 3-5) were researched using Copilot.   The authors have edited the material in length and specific content to more clearly reflect this research effort. According to APA style, it is cited here as (Copilot, 2025).

enforcement resources. Casinos are expected to provide security around and within their establishments.

Types of Crime

Studies have identified various types of crime associated with casinos, including:

- Theft and Robbery: Since casinos are basically a cash industry, they become attractive targets for theft and robbery. Both patrons and employees may become easy targets for motivated offenders.
- Fraud: Given the influx of cash to gambling establishments, casinos provide the venue to facilitate various forms of fraud, from counterfeit chips to rigged games. Online casinos have introduced new avenues for cybercrime and fraud.
- Prostitution: The influx of visitors and the presence of high rollers can lead to increased prostitution activities in and around casino establishments. Casinos become primary locations for human trafficking, as hotels and high-profile events. Special events like the Super Bowl and MLB World Series attract high rollers interested in illegal sex trafficking.
- Drug-Related Crimes: Casinos can become hotspots for drug trafficking and abuse, driven by the high disposable income of some patrons and the anonymity of large crowds.
- Prolific theft, burglary and robbery may occur elsewhere in order to maintain a gambling habit or addiction.

Social and Psychological Factors

The social and psychological aspects of gambling can also contribute to crime. Problem gambling, characterized by an inability to control gambling behavior, can lead to financial desperation and criminal activities such as embezzlement or theft. The stress and anxiety caused by gambling losses may lead to violent outbursts, domestic violence or suicide.

Community Impact

Opening a casino can have profound effects on the local community. While some residents may benefit from job opportunities and economic growth, others may experience increased crime, traffic congestion, and a decline in property values. The strain on families dealing with gambling addiction and chronic gamblers can lead to family violence and domestic abuse.

Regulatory and Law Enforcement Challenges

Regulating casino activities and enforcing laws can be challenging. Casino operators are often required to implement stringent security measures to prevent crime within their establishments. However, these measures can push criminal activities to surrounding areas, complicating law enforcement efforts. Collaboration between casino security teams and local law enforcement agencies is crucial to address these challenges.

Case Studies and Comparative Analysis

Prior research into the relationship between casinos and crime has been somewhat limited. For example, studies of Atlantic City (NJ) and Las Vegas (NV) offer contrasting perspectives on how casinos impact crime. While both cities have seen economic benefits from casinos, they have

also faced significant challenges related to crime and social issues. For a more detailed review see these studies:

- Smith, J.G., & Jones, L.M. (2015). The Economic and Social Impacts of Casinos on Urban Areas: A Comparative Analysis of Atlantic City and Las Vegas. Journal of Urban Affairs, 37(2), 123-145.
- Doe, J., & Roe, M. (2017). Crime and Casinos: An In-Depth Look at the Effects of Gambling Establishments. Criminology Review, 12(4), 234-256.

International Perspectives

Research on crime and casinos is not limited to the United States. Countries such as Macau, Singapore, and Canada have also experienced similar challenges. Comparing these international cases can help identify common patterns and effective strategies for mitigating crime related to casinos. See these international studies for more details:

- Lee, W.K., & Wong, S.H. (2016). Casinos and Crime: A Study of Macau's Gambling Industry. International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice, 44(3), 345-367.
- Smith, A., & Kumar, P. (2018). Gambling and Its Social Implications: A Comparative Study of Casinos in Canada and Singapore. Social Policy Journal, 29(1), 89-110.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies that track crime rates before and after the introduction of casinos, something the MGC studies have attempted to provide. Additionally, there is a need for more research which law enforcement strategies are more effective in mitigating casino-related crime. Evidence-Based Policing (EBP), Intelligence-Led Policing (ILP), Problem-Oriented Policing (POP), Community-Oriented Policing (COP) and Hotspot Policing are relevant models of policing that have demonstrated success at addressing crime and place. Exploring the social and psychological dimensions of gambling can also provide a deeper understanding of its impact on crime.

The relationship between crime and casinos requires a multifaceted approach that considers economic, social, and legal-enforcement factors. While casinos bring economic benefits, they also create potential risks related to crime and social disruption. Policymakers and law enforcement agencies need to work together to minimize the negative impacts of casinos on communities. By delving into the spatial dimensions of crime, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how environmental factors shape criminal behavior and offer practical solutions for creating safer communities. The authors hope that this information is a valuable resource and departments in the region continue to keep their residents safe.

The main purpose of this research endeavor is to provide insights into the scope and nature of crime in the Plainridge Park Region. The primary research questions offered here include:

- Does a spatial analysis of crime suggest that Plainridge Park Casino produces significant levels of crime?
- Where are the significant crime hotspots within the region, and how do they compare to one another?
- What crime trends exist between the years 2010 and 2023?
- What further research needs to be done?
- What are the most effective strategies that local law enforcement could employ to address crime and disorder?

Executive summary

This report, prepared by Justice Research Associates, LLC, under the guidance of Dr. Noah J. Fritz, assesses the impact of gambling on public safety in Massachusetts cities and towns, with a specific focus on the Plainridge Park Casino region. The study spanning from 2010 to 2023 aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of crime trends, hotspots, and potential mitigating strategies.

Since its opening in June 2015, Plainridge Park has shown crime and call-for-service totals commensurate with similarly sized facilities. The surrounding community has experienced little impact on most crimes and calls for service. However, the casino may have influenced an increase in credit card fraud, identity theft, and "con games" in the region, although more analysis is needed. The presence of the casino also seems related to increases in traffic collisions, lost property, and citizen complaints of traffic problems, which are expected with extra traffic and people in the area. The analysis is complicated by changes in reporting practices at several of the participating agencies. The methodology involved data collection from the records systems of Plainville, Attleboro, Mansfield, North Attleborough, Wrentham, and the State Police RAMS system. The data were merged and translated into a common database.

The report highlights the importance of a multifaceted approach to understanding the relationship between crime and casinos, considering economic, social, and regulatory factors.

Key Findings:

- Assuming distance decay and routine activity theory applies, crime and disorder do not directly impact the immediate area around the Plainridge Park Casino.

- The spatial and temporal analysis does not demonstrate a link between crime and the casino.

- While there are a few crimes of concern (discussed below), the crime appears to be geographically clustered as a result of other spatial factors, crime attractors and unique adult venues. They include Gillette Stadium, Xfinity Center Boundary Kitchen, and the Bar and Events Center. Several commercial strip malls at the south end of Attleboro near the apex of Highway 1 and A1 and the Main Street & Park Street in downtown Attleboro also cluster geographically. Of concern are the crimes of Theft of Motor Vehicle Part (i.e., typically targeting catalytic converters, air bags and rims-tires) skyrocketing in 2021 and 2022 to 124 and 129, respectively from 45 and 43 in 2019 and 2020.

- Shoplifting and Auto Theft have spiked and have trended significantly higher than previous low numbers (See Figure 3, p.16).
    - Shoplifting has risen to pre-2016 levels reaching 545 incidents in 2023 after dipping to a low of 269 in 2021.

    - Auto Thefts reached nearly record numbers in the region going back to 2014 (consistently above 100 before 2014), where 2021 and 2023 brought 99 and 95 stolen automobiles, respectively. Lowest auto theft incidents occurred between 2017 and 2020 dropping between 60-73 during this timeframe.

- Since the casino opened in 2016, very few thefts were attributed to the area around the casino: only 2% of Auto Thefts, 2% of Burglaries & Theft from Buildings, and 2% of Theft of or from Auto Parts as percentage of all thefts in the region during this period occurred near the casino.

- Drug and Alcohol Related Offenses have remained low since 2020 (See Figure 4, p.17).

- The number of Simple Assaults trended back up into the 600's the past three years, typically ranging from the high 500s to the mid 600s throughout the timeframe (See Figure 5, p.18).

- Vandalism experienced a slow decline since 2010 and has remained steady through the years the casino opened and beyond, until the past two years where it has climbed above 500 once again since its low watermark of 417 in 2019 (see Figure 5, p.18).

- Fraud-Con Games-Betting and Trespassing, each climbing significantly since the casino opened (See Figure 5, p.18).
    - Fraudulent or betting offenses have risen nearly every year since 2010 (n=113), with only slight reductions in numbers in 2014 and 2020, tripling in 2023 with 352f.
    - Trespassing has followed the same trend line as Disorderly Conduct with a steady decline from 2010 to 2020, only to rebound to historically high marks of 132 and 310 in 2023.

- Figure-6 (p.19) visually illustrates the five densest hotspots in the Plainridge Park region.
    - Attleboro Downtown has the greatest density of crime with 33,004 crimes occurring there since 2010. Attleboro also claims the second highest crime hotspot with 23,876 crimes in and around the commercial retail stores along Highways 1 and 1A.

- Figure-7 (p. 20) shows statistically significant micro-hotspots in the region that are offered as locations for further analysis and subsequent problem-solving initiatives.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies that track crime rates before and after the introduction of casinos. Additionally, there is a need for more research on the effectiveness of different regulatory and law enforcement strategies in mitigating casino-related crime. Exploring the social and psychological dimensions of gambling can also provide a deeper understanding of its impact on crime.

Further research and drilldown of the data and micro-hotspots should be performed by local crime analysts and officers, and Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) projects could be pursued to address localized issues related to crime and disorder. Mitigation funds are available to create multi-faceted responses and targeted solutions. Agency should reach out the MGC to discuss the possibilities for acquiring mitigation funds. See page 22 for a discussion of effective Evidence-Based Policing strategies.

This report offers a more detailed hotspot analysis and discussion of the findings. The results show that the primary hotpots are more predominantly farther away from the casino and in clear relationship to other crime attractors, like adult venues and business districts prone to property crime

Figure-1 illustrates the six (6) jurisdictions that make up the Plainridge Park Casino area and the target area for this research.

Figure 1: Plainridge Park Casino Surrounding Jurisdictions
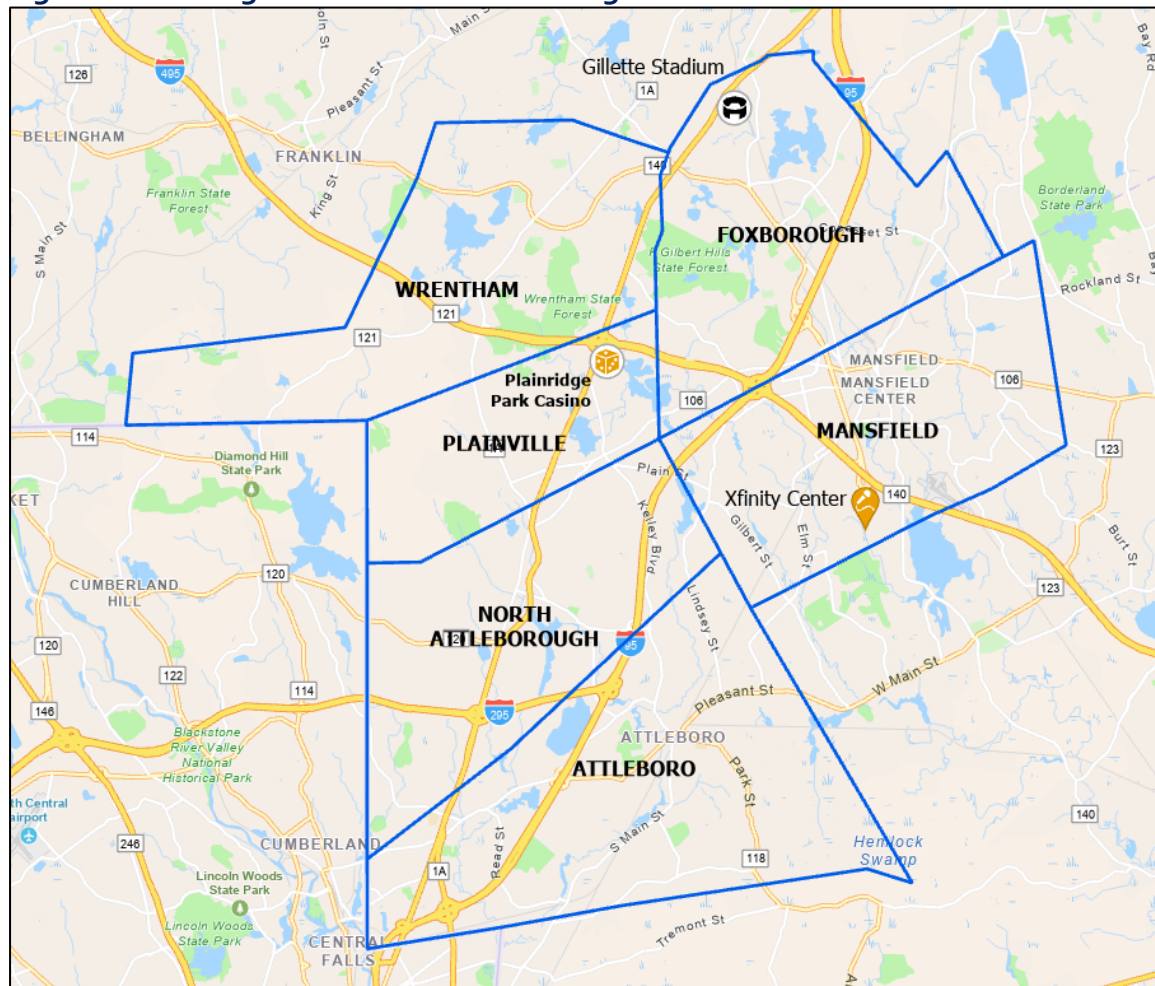
Table-1: 14 Years of Crime – Distribution*

Jurisdiction	Number of Crimes	Percent
Attleboro	70,708	47%
Foxborough	27,895	18%
Mansfield	30,110	20%
North Attleboro	10,487	7%
Plainville	6,621	4%
Wrentham	5,117	3%
Grand Total	150,938	100%

*Total 100% does not add up due to rounding.

It is clear that crime and disorder do not directly impact the immediate area around the Plainridge Park Casino. Plainville accounts for only 4% of the crime in the region and Wrentham, to the north of the casino only produces 3% of the crime in the region. Further in-depth research would have to be conducted on an offender-centric basis to determine if crimes elsewhere in the region are being committed to maintain gambling habits or addictions. Prolific offenders may be driving those incidents and arrest records could provide insight into this relationship.

Background and methodology

Background

In 2014, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission, in an effort to better assess the impacts of new gaming facilities across the state, commissioned a series of studies to assess and prepare for the social and economic impacts of gambling. Primary work is being done by the Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling in Massachusetts (SEIGMA) at the University of Massachusetts. This work draws upon research and experiences in many other states. For public safety issues specifically, however, the MGC felt it best to contract with someone with direct experience analyzing the crime, call-for-service, and collision records collected daily by Commonwealth police agencies.

While many studies focus on the effects of gambling on overall rates for serious crimes, very few studies have analyzed the specific and minute changes in public safety activity following the opening of casinos. They have not investigated variations by month and season, changes in patterns and hot spots, and changes in non-criminal activity such as traffic collisions and calls for service. The MGC is interested in the analyzing public safety at a level of detail that help police agencies anticipate and respond to emerging and changing problems.

The MGC has consistently contracted with crime analysis consultants to extract data from the local agencies affected by the opening of Massachusetts' new casinos, and to design a process for assessing changes in those agencies' activity on a periodic basis. Work began in 2015 with baseline and first-quarter analyses of the Plainville area, where Plainridge Park opened in June. This is the eighth annual report to investigate the changes since Plainridge Park opened, covering the years 2010-2023.

Methodology

The research design focuses on spatial analysis using Geographic Information System software called ArcGIS Pro. It was utilized to assess crime hotspots throughout the region, and a drill down was conducted on five (5) statistically significant hotspots – including Plainridge Park Casino. Using ArcGIS, the researchers utilized several GIS techniques to focus on the highest density crime areas; and to compare a breakdown of crime categories in the region.

The study also compared crime across the fourteen years of data that was available. Tableau and MS Excel were used to analyze several crime categories, including Violent Crime, Property Crime, Drug & Alcohol Related Crime, Disorderly, Simply Assaults, Fraudulent and Human Trafficking activity.

- Data was collected from records systems of Plainville, Attleboro, Mansfield, North Attleborough, Wrentham, and State Police RAMS system.
- Datasets were merged and translated into common database.
- The period under study included data from 2010-2023.
- Any category relatively higher than normal were more fully analyzed with collected data.

Limitations
- A full statewide dataset for crime, including data for control areas, are not yet available for study.
- A full statewide dataset for traffic collisions is not yet available.
- No current comparative data on calls for service exists.
- Offender centric assessments tracking chronic offenders and casino patrons need to be conducted to determine possible connection. This type of research is labor intensive and requires full access to police reports.

Notes from previous research
- Previous research has generally depended on summary statistics and only for Part 1 crimes[2] as reported to the FBI.
- Previous studies are mixed when it comes to the impact of casinos on crime in the surrounding communities.
- Studies that show an increase do not establish a causal relationship between gambling specifically and crime.
- "Crime does not inevitably increase with the introduction of a casino...The effects of casinos on crime appear to be related to a variety of variables which are only poorly understood." (Stitt, Nichols, & Giacopassi, 2003, p. 253)

Table-2 on the next page lists previous reports assessing changes in crime and police activity related to the three Massachusetts casinos, with this November 2023 report listed last.

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[2] FBI Part 1 index crimes include Murder, Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Larceny-Theft, and Motor Vehicle Theft.

Table 2: Publicly issued and planned reports on changes in crime and police activity

Issued	Report	Notes
August 2015	Report on baseline activity at Plainville area agencies	Established statistical measures for post-casino comparison
November 2015	Evaluation of change in police data after the first three months of Plainridge Park	Few changes discernible in the immediate 3 months
April 2016	Analysis of changes in police data after the first six months of operation at Plainridge Park Casino	Identified traffic-related calls for service as likely related to PPC. Noted increases in fraud crimes
December 2016	Analysis of changes in police data after the first year of operation at Plainridge Park Casino	Continued to note increases in traffic-related calls; established credit card fraud increases as "likely related"
December 2017	Analysis of changes in police data after the first 2 years of operation at Plainridge Park Casino	Most comprehensive report so far. Included comparative analysis of control areas
June 2018	Report on baseline activity in Springfield-area agencies	First report in preparation for MGM casino
December 2018	Three-year analysis of Plainridge Park area.	Includes comprehensive traffic study
September 2019	Eight-month analysis of MGM Springfield	Showed increases in traffic collisions and complaints but few crimes increase
September 2019	Baseline analysis of Encore Boston Harbor area	First report on this casino
October 2019	Four-year analysis of Plainridge Park	Final Plainridge Park reports shows few public safety issues attributable to the casino
February 2020	One-year analysis of MGM Springfield	MGM is shown to be potentially related to some traffic issues and small patterns in specific communities
March 2020	Six-month analysis of Encore Boston Harbor	Like MGM, Encore itself is busy, but has few detectable influences on surrounding area
February 2021	18-month analysis of MGM Springfield	First report to cover COVID-era closings
March 2021	1-year analysis of Encore Boston Harbor	Second report to cover COVID-era closings
April–June 2021	Special reports on drunk driving, casino-based crime, and the MGM 2-year report	Special Report on MGM
March 2023	Assessing the Influence of Gambling on Public Safety in Massachusetts Cities and Towns During the COVID-19 Pandemic	Third report to cover COVID-era closings in *Encore Boston Harbor* of pre-to-post Covid periods.
November 2023	*Crime Comparison Analysis of Changes in the MGM Springfield Region* - 2023	Third report to cover MGM looking specifically at crime hotspots and COVID-19 closure effects
March 2025	*Assessing the Impact of Gambling on Public Safety on the Plainridge Region*	Third report to cover MGM looking specifically at crime hotspots in the region

Data Collection

Data used in this report was extracted from the individual records management systems of the Plainville, Attleboro, Foxborough, Mansfield, North Attleborough, and Wrentham Police Departments. An ODBC (i.e., Open Database Connectivity) connection to each of these agencies' records management and computer-aided dispatch databases was utilized to extract data from 2010 to 2023. A database was created in Microsoft Access, and used a series of "make table" queries to copy the data into Access data tables. Data was imported into ArcGIS, Tableau and MS Excel to perform the temporal and spatial analysis. The number of records downloaded resulted in 150,938 crimes recorded, representing 148,270 unique events occurring since January 2010. Some records could not be geocoded as a result of incomplete address information. Subsets of the data were analyzed within those hotspots and within crime categories of interest.

The agencies' individual data tables were compiled into a series of "master" tables. This required translating each dataset into a common set of codes. The uniformities imposed by the NIBRS (National Incident Based Reporting System) reporting system and the Massachusetts crash reporting system facilitated the translation of those tables. It was a bit more difficult for CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) tables, which have no uniform data structure from system to system or even among agencies using the same system.

Table 3: Data combined into a master call-for-service table.

incnum	agency	dtreceived	IncidentType	OrigIncidentType	Street
15-15178	Mansfield	07/12/2015 18:38:00	Crime Enforcement		SCHOOL ST
2015000005935	Wrentham	07/12/2015 18:37:43	Traffic Collision		Washington Street
2015000018989	North Attleboro	07/12/2015 18:32:58	Domestic Dispute	Domestic	SOUTH WASHINGTON ST
15072062	Attleboro	07/12/2015 18:31:54	Building Check	SEC CHK	OAKHILL AVE
2015000005934	Wrentham	07/12/2015 18:30:42	Disorderly		Premium Outlet Boulev
2015-0H3-003706	MSP	07/12/2015 18:30:00	Fire	Fire	RT 495 North, South of E
2015000003935	Plainville	07/12/2015 18:27:02	Lost Property	Lost and Found	Bacon Square
2015000005933	Wrentham	07/12/2015 18:26:57	Medical		Washington Street
2015000018988	North Attleboro	07/12/2015 18:26:12	Building Check	Building Check	HOMEWARD LN
15-15177	Mansfield	07/12/2015 18:26:00	Crime Enforcement		SOUTH MAIN ST
2015000005932	Wrentham	07/12/2015 18:25:54	General Service		Premium Outlet Boulev
2015000018987	North Attleboro	07/12/2015 18:25:29	Investigation	Investigation	SOUTH WASHINGTON ST
15-15176	Mansfield	07/12/2015 18:17:00	Traffic Enforcement		MAPLE ST
2015-0H3-003705	MSP	07/12/2015 18:16:00	Road Conditions	Debris in Road	RT 295 South, South of E
15072061	Attleboro	07/12/2015 18:14:43	Suspicious Activity	SUSP PERS	PLEASANT ST
2015000018986	North Attleboro	07/12/2015 18:11:41	Traffic Collision	Accident NO/PI	CUMBERLAND AV

Limitations

Crime figures fluctuate constantly in most agencies, and any given year often produces statistically significant increases. Such changes are sometimes simple to explain by changes in the jurisdiction or police strategies and practices, but equally as often they confound explanation.

Findings

The following findings suggest that the Plainridge Park Casino does not appear to cause a spatial relationship to crime in the region.

Table-1: 14 Years of Crime – Distribution Across Jurisdictions*

Jurisdiction	Number of Crimes	Percent
Attleboro	70,708	47%
Foxborough	27,895	18%
Mansfield	30,110	20%
North Attleboro	10,487	7%
Plainville	6,621	4%
Wrentham	5,117	3%
Grand Total	150,938	100%

*Total 100% does not add up due to rounding.

It is clear that crime and disorder, assuming distance decay[3] and routine activity theory[4] applies here, and does not directly impact the immediate area around the Plainridge Park Casino. Plainville accounts for only 4% of the crime in the region and Wrentham, to the north of the casino, only produces 3% of the crime in the region. Further in-depth research would have to be conducted on an offender-centric basis to determine if crimes elsewhere in the region are being committed to maintain gambling habits or addictions. Prolific offenders may be driving those incidents and arrest records could provide insight into this relationship.

The spatial and temporal analysis does not demonstrate a link between crime and the casino. While there are a few crimes of concern (discussed below), the crime appears to be geographically clustered as a result of other spatial factors, crime attractors and unique adult venues in the region, including Gillette Stadium, Xfinity Center, Boundary Kitchen, Bar and Events Center and several commercial strip malls at the south end of Attleboro near the apex of Highway 1 and A1 , and the Main Street & Park Street in downtown Attleboro. These are typical high density crime areas and have crime volume at rates significantly higher than Plainridge Park. Below is a breakdown of crime categories over the 14-year periods for (1) Violent Crime, (2) Property Crime, (3) Drug-Alcohol Crime, (4) Disorderly-Simple Assault-Fraudulent-Human Trafficking Crime.

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[3] David Canter (1994); Kim Rossmo (2000); and Patricia and Paul Brantingham (1991).
[4] Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979).

Figure 2: Violent Crime in PPC Region from 2010 to 2023

Violent Crime in PPC Region

Casino Opened in June

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Murder	1	4	1	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	1	1
Rape	57	81	79	51	53	72	71	79	78	51	39	49	36	26
Robbery	49	31	38	32	23	20	29	22	14	23	31	27	21	25
Aggravated Assault	193	182	166	162	147	185	164	175	153	171	138	193	194	201

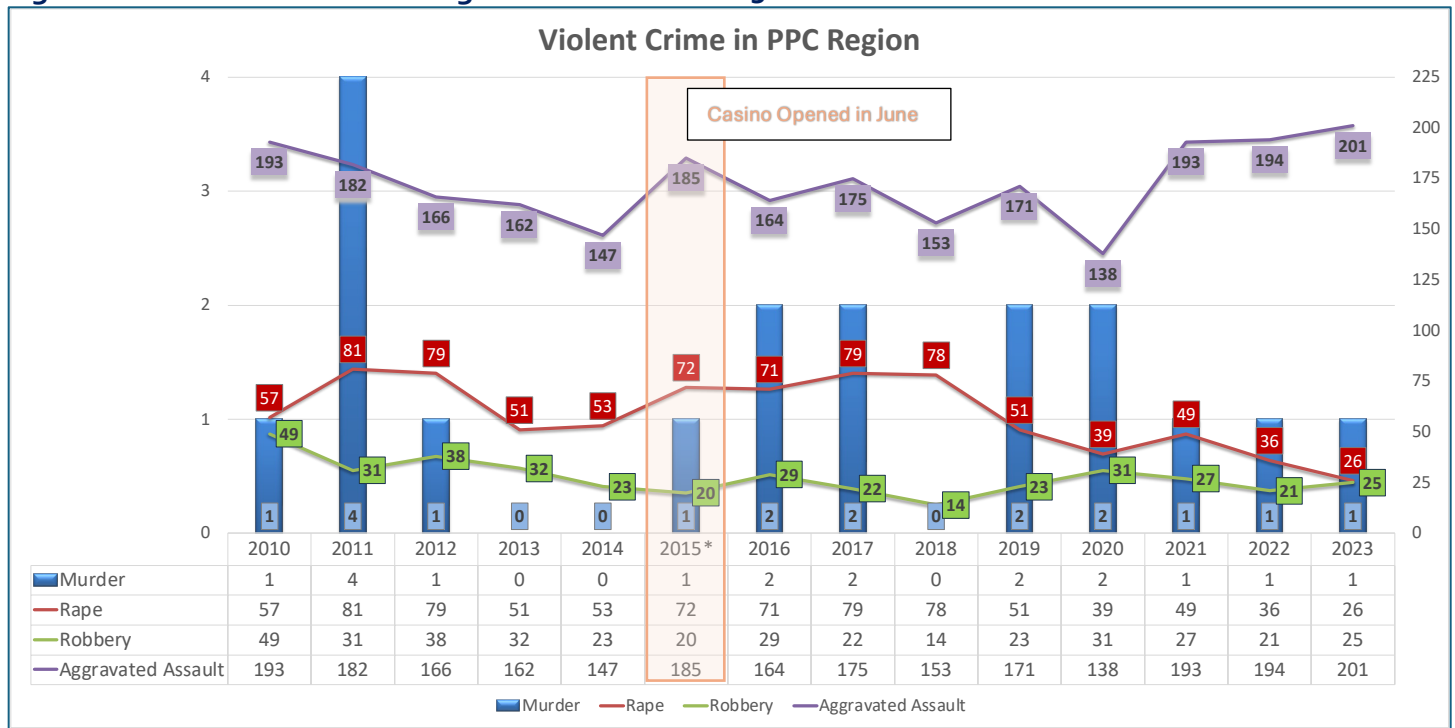Murder ◼ Rape — Robbery — Aggravated Assault —

Figure-2 shows that Murder in the entire region ebbs and flows between zero and four homicides over the past 14 years. 2011 had four (4) murders, followed by four years with two, four years with one, and three years with zero homicides. Since the casino opened* in June 2015, the five hotspots account for only three (3) homicides, all within Attleboro. The five high areas of crime clustering included, Gillette Stadium, Xfinity Center, Park & Main in downtown Attleboro and the rough triangle in south Attleboro where Highway 1 and 1A meet in South Attleboro and split south on separate cloverleaf that leads to Interstate 95. See page 19 for a discussion of these hotspots.

Robberies remained flat for nearly the entire 14-year period, fluctuating from a low of 14 in 2018, peaking during COVID-19 since the Casino opened with 31 and remaining steady in the twenties the past three years. Rapes have gradual gone down since 2017 and 2018 with 79 and 78, respectively, dropping nearly in half since 2018. 2023 only had 26 rapes, nearly a 68% reduction since it peaked in 2011 with 81 and nearly again in 2017 (n=79). The only violent crime to show signs of increase is Aggravated Assault, hitting a high-water mark of 201 in 2023 – the highest number over this extended period. The past three years have consistently reached above 190 for this serious offense.

In regard to the dates when the Plainridge Park Casino opened up, violent crime remained steady or declined in four of the five violent crimes assessed. Violent crime does not appear to be correlated to the casino opening or experience a rise in the subsequent years since it has been in operation. As the hotspot analysis will show in the subsequent pages, the casino area did not account for violent crime in the region.

Figure 3: Property Crime in PPC Region from 2010 to 2023

Property Crime in PPC Region 2010 - 2023

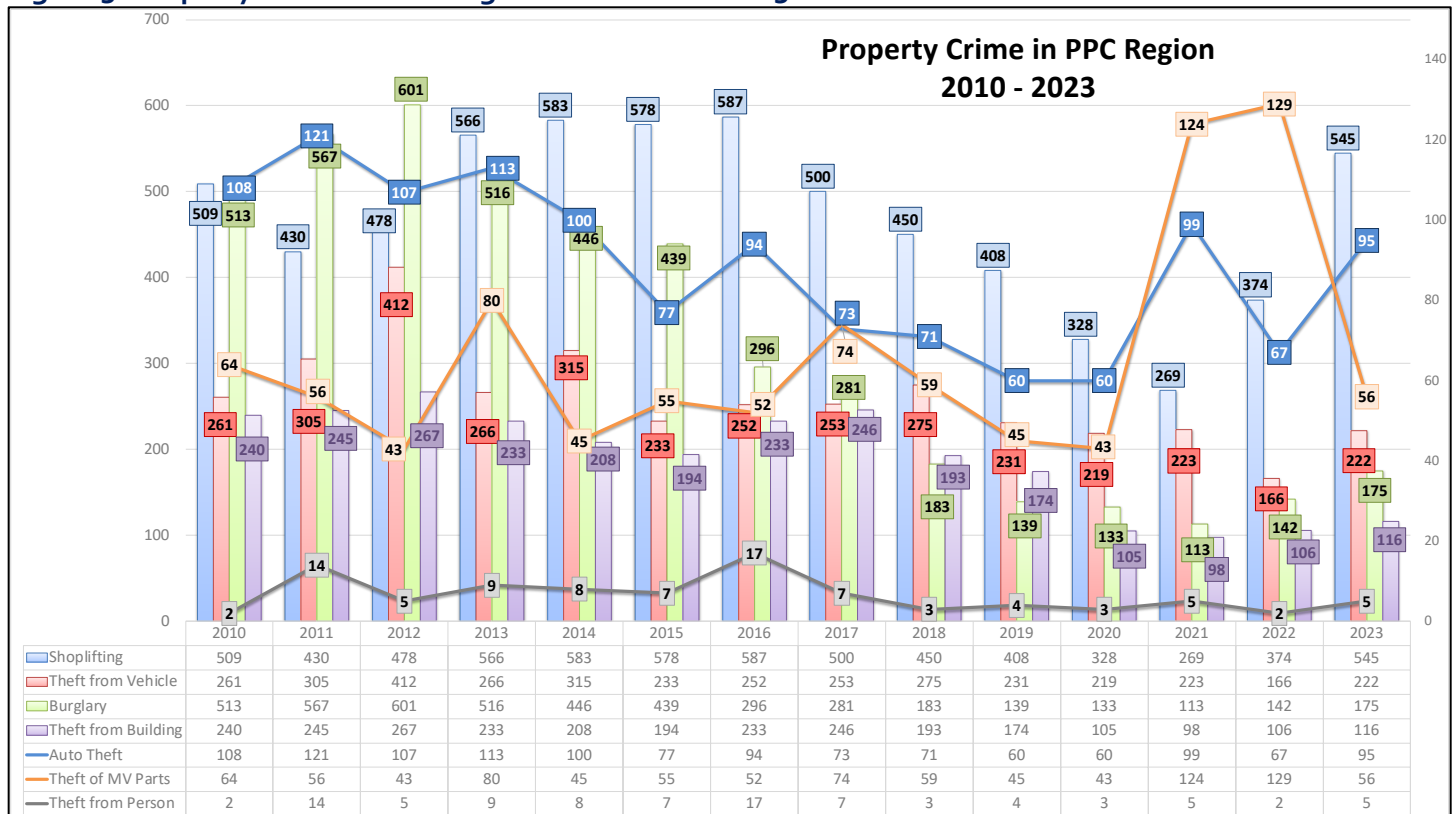|	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Shoplifting	509	430	478	566	583	578	587	500	450	408	328	269	374	545
Theft from Vehicle	261	305	412	266	315	233	252	253	275	231	219	223	166	222
Burglary	513	567	601	516	446	439	296	281	183	139	133	113	142	175
Theft from Building	240	245	267	233	208	194	233	246	193	174	105	98	106	116
Auto Theft	108	121	107	113	100	77	94	73	71	60	60	99	67	95
Theft of MV Parts	64	56	43	80	45	55	52	74	59	45	43	124	129	56
Theft from Person	2	14	5	9	8	7	17	7	3	4	3	5	2	5

Figure-3 shows the crime trends for seven (7) crime categories: (1) Shoplifting, (2) Theft from Vehicle, (3) Burglary, (4) Theft from Building, (5) Auto Theft, (6) Theft of MV Parts, and (7) Theft from Person. Of these seven crimes, four categories of crime have consistently dropped over the 14-year period. The above graph illustrates a steady reduction in the property crimes of Theft from Vehicle (166 in 2022), Burglary (113 in 2021), Theft from Building (98 in 2021) and Theft from Person (2 in 2022) - with the proceeding numbers marking the low watermark for each crime. Except for "Theft from Person", the numbers from 2019 through 2023 are all lower for the other three categories than all previous years.

- Of concern are the crimes of Theft of Motor Vehicle Part (i.e., typically targeting catalytic converters, air bags and rims-tires) skyrocketing in 2021 and 2022 to 124 and 129, respectively. These extremely high numbers come after consecutive years of 45 and 43, bellwether years in 2019 and 2020. On a positive note, Theft of MV Parts has dropped to 56 incidents in 2023, returning to about average. Shoplifting and Auto Theft have spiked and have trended significantly higher than previous low numbers. Shoplifting has risen to pre-2016 levels reaching 545 incidents in 2023 after dipping to a low of 269 in 2021. Since low marks in 2019 and 2020 at 60 occurrences for Auto Thefts, 2021 and 2023 brought 99 and 95 stolen automobiles, reaching nearly record numbers going back to 2014. 2022 did offer a short reprieve with 67 cars taken. Since the casino opened in 2016, very few thefts were attributed to the area immediately around the casino: only 2% of Auto Thefts, 2% of Burglaries & Theft from Buildings, and 2% of Theft of or from Auto Parts as percentage of all thefts in the region during this period occurred near the casino. Said differently, 98% of these thefts occurred outside the casino areas, relatively far in distance from the casino.

Figure 4: Drug & Alcohol Related Crime in PPC Region from 2010 to 2023

Drugs & Alcohol Related Offenses
2010 - 2023

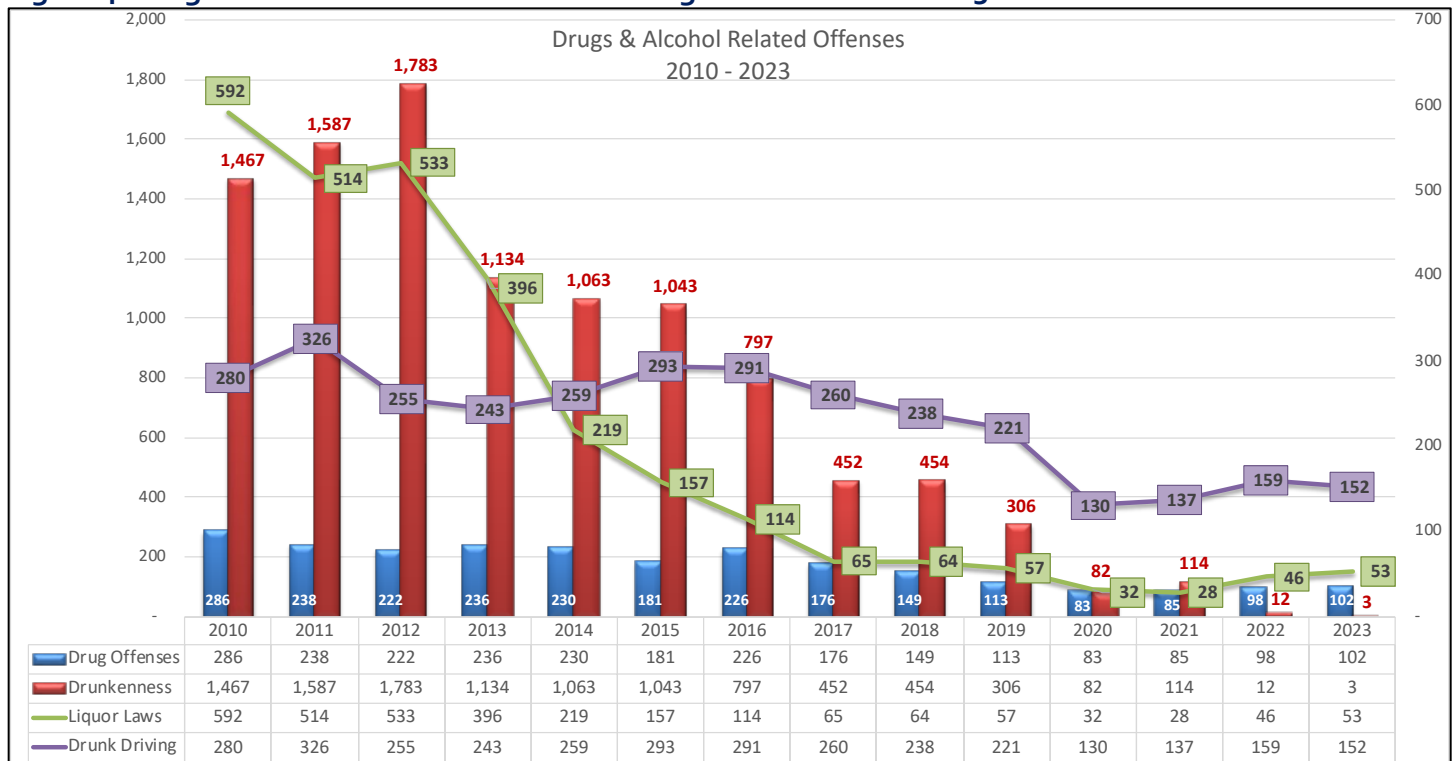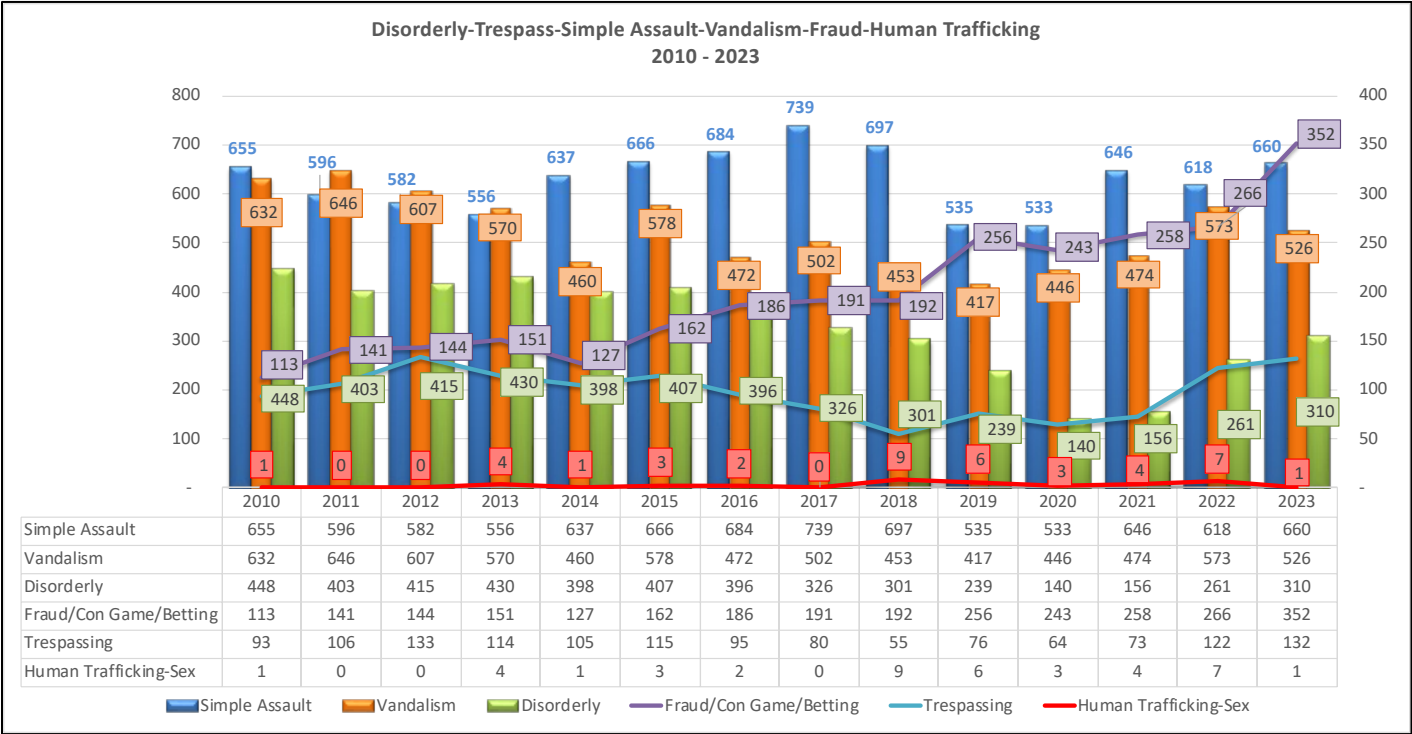|	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Drug Offenses	286	238	222	236	230	181	226	176	149	113	83	85	98	102
Drunkenness	1,467	1,587	1,783	1,134	1,063	1,043	797	452	454	306	82	114	12	3
Liquor Laws	592	514	533	396	219	157	114	65	64	57	32	28	46	53
Drunk Driving	280	326	255	243	259	293	291	260	238	221	130	137	159	152

Figure-4 clearly shows significant decreases in Drug and Alcohol Related Offenses. Each of the four (4) categories: (1) drugs, (2) Drunkenness, (3) Liquor Laws, and (4) Drunk Driving; have all remained low since 2020, experience slight increase in more recent years; but all showing steady drops in incidents since the casino opened up in 2016. It appears somewhat of an anomaly for these crimes to have dropped to these levels. As a result of COVID-19 and civil unrest, police departments across the country have experienced significant staffing shortages. These shortages make it difficult to proactively enforce these types of offenses.

Figure-5 illustrates a similar fluctuating pattern across these six (6) crimes: Simple Assault, Vandalism, Disorderly, Fraud, Trespassing, and Human Trafficking. Simple Assaults began to rise a couple of years before the casino open in 2014, only to dip in 2018 and 2019. These minor assaults trended back up into the 600's the past three years, perhaps indicative of the stress and anxiety citizens are feeling after COVID-19 and political tension. Vandalism experienced a steady slow decline since 2010 and had remained steady through the years the casino opened and beyond, until the past two years where it has reached above 500 once again.

Disorderly conduct remained relative flat for the six years prior to the casino opening, then dropped significantly to 140 in 2020 (most likely due to reduced human interactions). It steadily rose each year since 2020 and now reached above 300 in 2023. Disorderly behavior remains relatively low compared to pre-casino years. Trespassing reached 100 incidents in 2011 for five years rolling, to then drop to 64 in 2020 and has climbed back above 310 in 2023.

Figure 5: Disorderly, Simple Assault, Fraudulent & Human Trafficking Crimes in Region from 2010 - 2023

Disorderly-Trespass-Simple Assault-Vandalism-Fraud-Human Trafficking
2010 - 2023

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Simple Assault	655	596	582	556	637	666	684	739	697	535	533	646	618	660
Vandalism	632	646	607	570	460	578	472	502	453	417	446	474	573	526
Disorderly	448	403	415	430	398	407	396	326	301	239	140	156	261	310
Fraud/Con Game/Betting	113	141	144	151	127	162	186	191	192	256	243	258	266	352
Trespassing	93	106	133	114	105	115	95	80	55	76	64	73	122	132
Human Trafficking-Sex	1	0	0	4	1	3	2	0	9	6	3	4	7	1

Legend: Simple Assault, Vandalism, Disorderly, Fraud/Con Game/Betting, Trespassing, Human Trafficking-Sex

The two more interesting crime growth categories are Fraud-Con Games-Betting and Trespassing, each climbing significantly since the casino opened. Fraudulent or betting offenses have risen nearly every year since 2010, with only slight reductions in numbers in 2014 and 2020. At this point in time, no plausible explanation exists in the literature, but this would be one category, albeit rather small in numbers, that could benefit from additional research or investigation. Trespassing has followed the same trend line as Disorderly Conduct with a steady decline over previous years only to rebound to historically high marks.

The last crime category in this group, simple for reporting purposes, is Human Trafficking. As of particular interest to the Massachusetts Gaming Commission, it was added for reasons of discussion. As in the past, it is most likely due to under-reporting that these numbers remain low, ranging from zero incidents (in three years) to a high reporting mark in 2018 of nine during this time frame. It would be interesting to know what was significant about 2018 and whether it was a result of a task force or an in-depth investigation? Albeit low numbers overall (ranging from 0 to 9), one can see that they continue to fluctuate with 7 in 2022 and 1 in 2023. These relatively low numbers and the existing history of poor data collection on this serious phenomenon causes concern by this research team to speculate. Further research is required and a refinement of data collection protocols before trends can be accurately assessed.

Crime Hotspots in the Region

Figure 6: Graduate Symbol Map of Significant Hotspots with the PPC Region
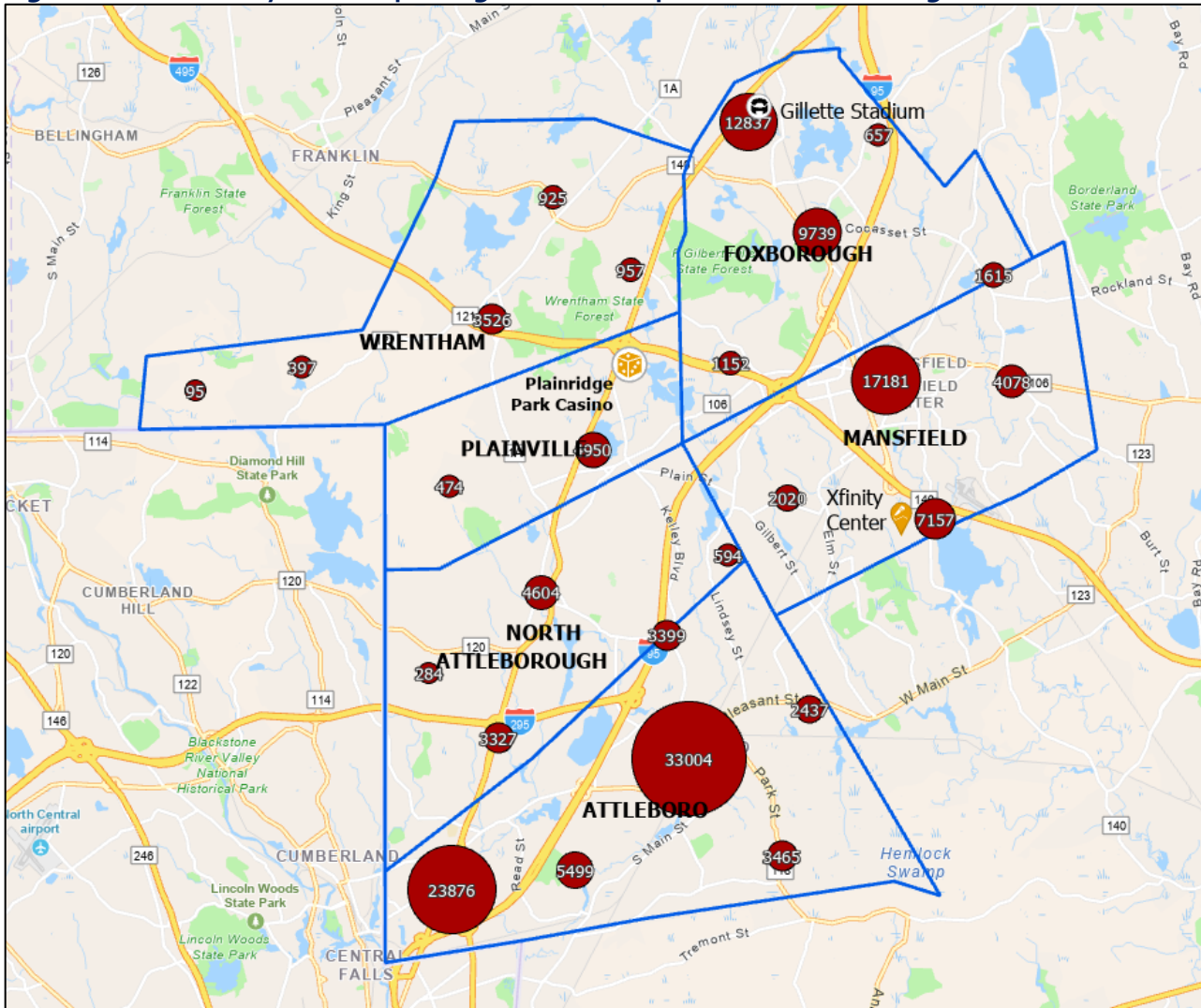

Figure-6 visually illustrates the five densest hotspots in the Plainridge Park region. This graduated symbol tool in ArcGIS Pro provides an interactive zoom feature that allows a researcher to view the dispersion of hotspots. This allows crime mappers the ability to see hotspots within hotspots on the fly. For our purposes here, the tool was used to identify five hotspots within the region. The five high areas of crime clustering included, (1) Gillette Stadium (n=12,837), (2) Xfinity Center (n=7,157), (3) Park & Main in downtown Attleboro (n=33,004) and (4) the rough triangle in south Attleboro (n=23,876) where Highway 1 and 1A meet in South Attleboro and split south on separate cloverleaf that leads to Interstate 95, and (5) Mansfield Center (17,181). For comparison purposes, Plainridge Park Casino simply did not register a significant hotspot. Each hotspot was created using a 1-mile buffer around the center of these areas, respectively. Figure-6 clearly shows that Attleboro Downtown has the greatest density of crime with 33,004 crimes occurring there since 2010. Attleboro claims the second highest crime hotspot with 23,876 crimes in and around the commercial retail stores along Highways 1 and 1A heading south. While Mansfield had the third largest hotspot with 17,181 offenses recorded, it was Gillette Stadium and Xfinity Center that were selected

for comparison purposes due to their adult venue equivalency to the casino. Proximity-wise, this Figure-6 illustrates that the Plainridge Park Casino is not generating a crime hotspot.

Other tools are available to visualize statistically significant areas called raster's, as seen below – Figure-7.

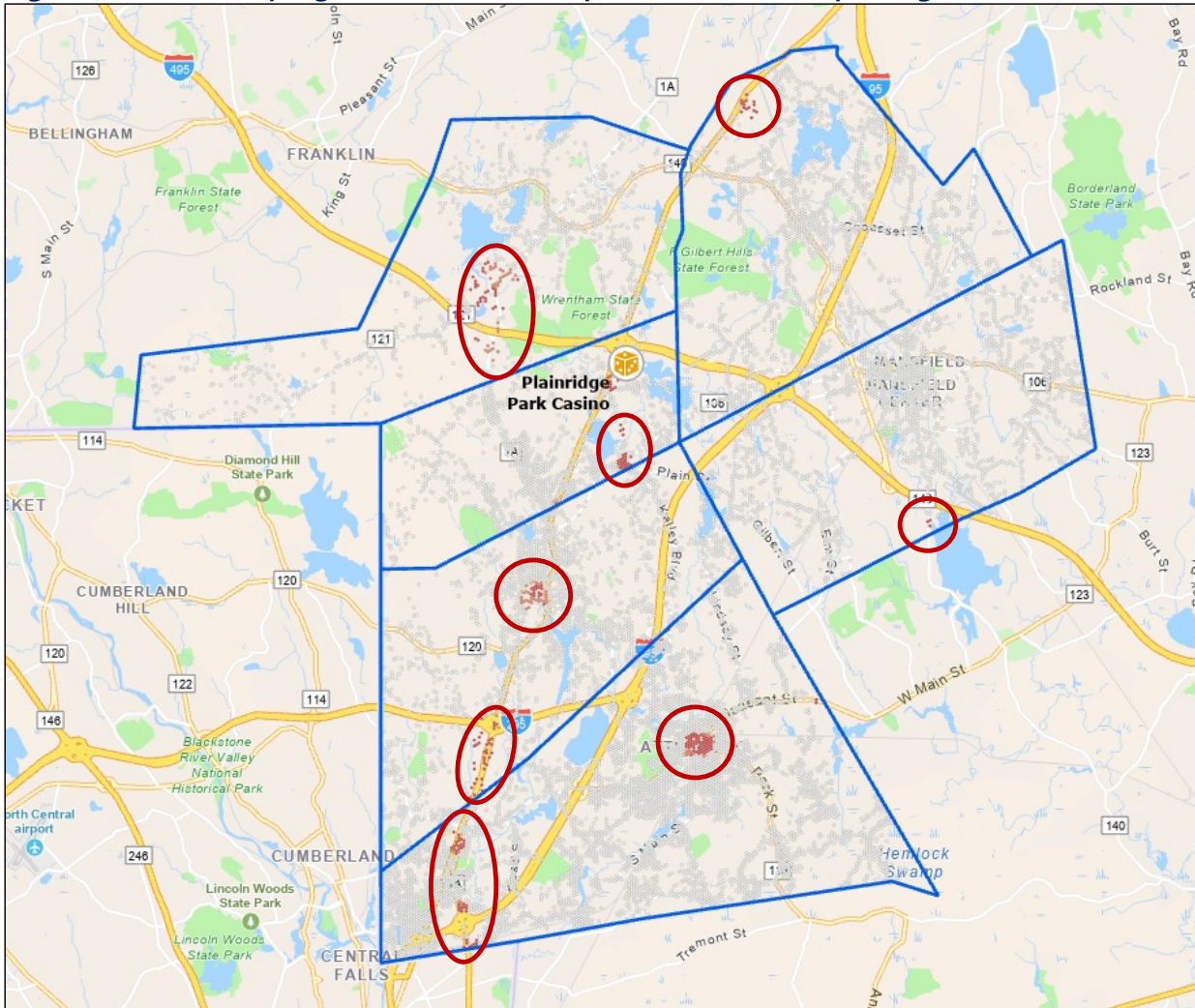**Figure 7: Statistically Significant Micro Hotspots – Further analysis urged**

Figure-7 shows an alternative hotspot tool used to create statistically significant micro-hotspots. They are offered here as locations for further analysis and subsequent problem-solving initiatives. Each one could be nominated for a POP project for which the SARA model (i.e., Scan, Analyze, Response, and Assess) could be utilized to further understand the scope and nature of the underlying factors that create these respective crime clusters. Further research is obviously needed to fully understand the dynamics of environmental and socio-economic conditions in these neighborhoods. Each one could require months to review the data and design crime prevention and enforcement strategies to address the causal factors. Additional time is necessary to conduct an assessment as to which strategies are most effective at reducing crime and disorder. Using SARA produces legitimacy with community members and lowers fear among residents. POP is a long term, strategic approach that requires ongoing commitment from crime analysts, officers, and community stakeholders. It may also require a multi-faceted approach from various other governmental agencies and services.

Table 3: Statistically Significant Micro Hotspots – Further analysis urged

Offenses - 2015 to 2023	Gillette Stadium		HWY1&1A Triangle		Park & Main Attleboro		Plainridge Park Casino		Xfinity		Grand Total
Murder	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	3
Kidnapping	0	0%	1	25%	3	75%	0	0%	0	0%	4
Sex Crimes	17	14%	19	16%	77	63%	2	2%	7	6%	122
Robbery & Theft from Person	9	16%	22	39%	22	39%	1	2%	2	4%	56
Aggravated Assault	50	20%	38	15%	123	49%	5	2%	33	13%	249
Burglary & Theft from Building	53	10%	149	27%	326	59%	15	3%	10	2%	553
Larceny-Theft	213	17%	548	44%	364	29%	104	8%	20	2%	1,249
Theft from & of MV Parts	20	5%	153	39%	201	51%	16	4%	7	2%	397
Auto Theft	17	19%	26	30%	35	40%	8	9%	2	2%	88
Drunkenness	308	29%	14	1%	56	5%	5	0%	693	64%	1,076
Drunk Driving	57	22%	59	23%	99	38%	14	5%	30	12%	259
Liquor Laws	40	28%	31	22%	29	21%		0%	41	29%	141
Disorderly	232	29%	101	13%	255	32%	8	1%	203	25%	799
Trespassing	81	42%	15	8%	47	25%	3	2%	45	24%	191
Vandalism	101	17%	124	21%	324	54%	24	4%	27	5%	600
Drug Offenses	28	10%	65	24%	127	46%	3	1%	51	19%	274
Pornography & Prostitution	1	6%	2	11%	14	78%		0%	1	6%	18
Simple Assault	222	21%	151	15%	474	46%	15	1%	174	17%	1,036
Threats	36	18%	37	18%	122	60%	2	1%	7	3%	204
Weapon Laws	6	8%	16	22%	48	66%	1	1%	2	3%	73
Fraud	98	14%	266	39%	269	40%	17	3%	26	4%	676
Family Offenses & Runaway	3	0%	197	26%	558	73%	3	0%		0%	761
All Other Offenses	724	22%	1,019	30%	1,369	41%	6	0%	229	7%	3,347
Grand Total	2,316	19%	3,053	25%	4,945	41%	252	2%	1,610	13%	12,176

Table-3 takes a deeper dive into each of the five hotspots selected for evaluation. One finding is how few the number of crimes that occurred within 1-mile of Plainridge Park Casino. In comparison to the other four 1-mile buffered areas, the casino buffer only made up 2% of the total crime across all five hotspots. Only Larceny-Theft, Auto Theft and Drunk Driving had over 5% of the aggregate volume of crime. By contrast, the 1-mile area represented by Park & Main Streets in downtown Attleboro contains 41% of all the crime in these target areas. All three murders (100%) occurred here. Kidnapping (75%), Sex Crimes (63%), Burglary (59%), Pornography-Prostitution (78%), Threats (60%), Weapons (66%) and Family Offenses (73%); all occurred within this high crime area. Distance Decay Theory would suggest that these crimes are being committed by marauders operating within their routine activity space. Downtown Attleboro is 6.6 miles away from the casino, and while it is certainly possible that offenders commit crime in this hotspot to obtain money to gamble, it is very unlikely. Further research or investigation would be necessary to link prolific offenders of property crimes or monetary crimes to frequent patrons of the casino. Understanding the connection would be invaluable if a list of repeat offenders could be compared to patrons of Plainridge Park.

It is more likely explained by Social Disorganization Theory, Routine Activity Theory and Crime Pattern Theory that suggest environmental factors from within draw vulnerable victims and targets to these high-density crime spots.

When compared to previous MGC research (Table 4) regarding this region, Figure-8 below supports the hypotheses that other crime generators are at play in Xfinity, Gillette Stadium and other commercial retail areas with a plethora of targets and vulnerability. Even South Attleboro on Highway 1A near the Rhode Island border houses another adult venue called "Boundary Kitchen, Bar and Events Center" (Figure 8) —less than one block over the state border at 67 Garrity St, Pawtucket, RI 02861. It used to be called the "Epik Live Event Center and has 2,680 crimes reported across the street in South Attleboro. Statistically, that would not be a coincidence.

Table 4: 2016 MGC Report Finding

Figure 8: Attleboro Highway 1 & 1A Hotspot
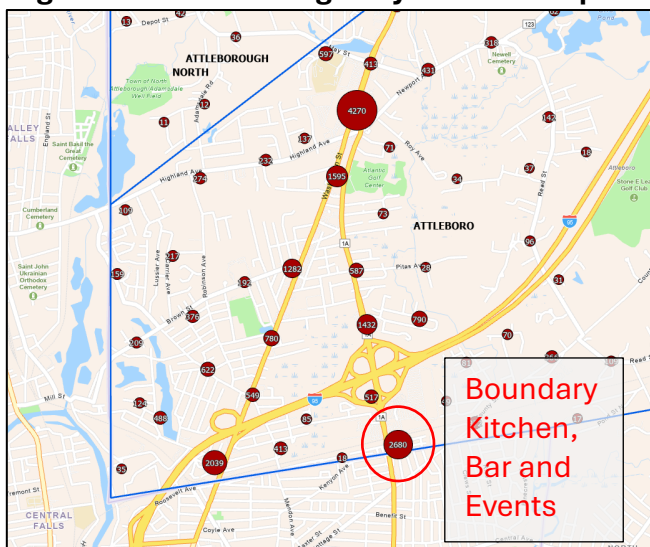
We now turn our attention to a brief discussion of the strategies offered by the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy[5] that are most effective in fighting and preventing crime.

<u>Evidence-Based Policing -</u> Strategies for Effective Crime Reduction[6]

Evidence-Based Policing (EBP) is a paradigm that emphasizes the use of empirical research and data to inform and guide police practices and policies. This approach seeks to ensure that law enforcement strategies scientifically validate and demonstrate important ways to reduce crime and enhance public safety. By relying on rigorous research and evaluation, evidence-based policing aims to improve the efficiency and legitimacy of police work. Research in the field of evidence-based policing has identified several strategies that are particularly effective in reducing crime and improving community safety: Hotspot Policing, Problem-Oriented Policing (POP), Community Policing (COP), Focused Deterrence, and Restorative Justice.

Hotspot Policing

Hotspot Policing is a strategic approach employed by law enforcement agencies to prevent and reduce crime by focusing resources and efforts on specific geographical areas with high levels of criminal

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[5] https://cebcp.org/evidence-based-policing/
[6] Parts of this Section (pp. 22-25) were researched using Microsoft Copilot.   The authors have edited the material in length and specific content to more clearly reflect this research effort. According to APA style, it is cited here as (Copilot, 2025).

activity. This method is based on the principle that crime is not evenly distributed across a city or region but is concentrated in small, specific areas referred to as crime hotspots. By increasing police presence and implementing targeted interventions in these hotspots, agencies can significantly reduce crime rates. Hotspot policing involves various tactics and strategies to target and reduce crime in identified high density crime locations. Popular strategies include directed patrol, patrol saturation, surveillance, DDACTS, and predictive policing.

Characteristics of Crime Hotspots and Effective Strategies

- High Crime Rates: Crime hotspots are identified by their significantly higher crime rates compared to surrounding areas.
- Repeat Offenses: These areas often see a recurrence of similar types of crimes, such as burglaries, assaults, or drug-related offenses.
- Environmental Factors: Poor lighting, lack of surveillance, abandoned buildings, and urban decay can contribute to this concentration of crime.
- Socioeconomic Conditions: Areas with higher levels of poverty, unemployment, and social disorganization are more likely to become prone to high levels of crime.

Increased Police Presence

One of the most common tactics is to increase the visibility of law enforcement in these areas. This can involve regular patrols, establishing temporary or permanent police stations, and deploying specialized units. The increased presence of officers can deter potential offenders, enhance community safety, and provide rapid response to incidents.

Data-Driven Approaches

Utilizing crime data and predictive analytics, law enforcement agencies can identify emerging spatial patterns and allocate resources accordingly. Advanced technologies, such as geographic information systems (GIS) and crime mapping software, allow for real-time monitoring and analysis of crime trends.

Collaborative Efforts

Hotspot Policing often involves collaboration between law enforcement, community organizations, and other stakeholders. By working together, agencies can share information, resources, and expertise to develop comprehensive strategies for crime reduction and prevention.

The identification of crime hotspots are essential components of modern crime prevention strategies. By concentrating efforts on areas with high levels of criminal activity, law enforcement agencies can reduce crime, improve community safety, and address the root causes of criminal behavior. Through increased police presence, problem-oriented approaches, data-driven tactics, and collaborative efforts, hotspot policing offers a promising path toward creating safer and more resilient communities.

Problem-Oriented Policing (POP)

This strategy focuses on identifying and addressing the underlying causes of crime in troubled neighborhoods. By analyzing crime patterns and working with community stakeholders, law enforcement can develop tailored interventions to reduce crime. This approach may include environmental design changes, community engagement initiatives, and social services support.

Problem-0riented Policing involves identifying specific crime problems and developing tailored interventions to address them. This strategy focuses on:

- Scanning: Identifying and prioritizing crime problems through data analysis and community input.
- Analysis: Conducting in-depth research to understand the underlying causes and contributing factors of the identified problems.
- Response: Developing and implementing targeted interventions to address the root causes of crime.
- Assessment: Evaluating interventions to determine if they work and making necessary adjustments.

Community Policing (COP)

Community Policing emphasizes building strong relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. This approach seeks to:

- Enhance Trust: Foster mutual respect and trust between police officers and community members through regular interaction and collaboration.
- Problem-Solving: Work with community stakeholders to identify and address local crime and safety concerns.
- Prevention: Focus on proactive measures to prevent crime and improve the overall quality of life in the community.

Focused Deterrence

Focused deterrence strategies aim to prevent crime by targeting specific individuals or groups who are at high risk of offending. This approach often involves:

- Direct Communication: Engaging with offenders to convey clear and credible messages about the consequences of continued criminal behavior.
- Support Services: Providing access to social services, education, and employment opportunities to facilitate positive behavior change.
- Swift and Certain Sanctions: Ensuring that any violations are met with prompt and predictable enforcement actions.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice strategies aim to repair the harm caused by criminal behavior through reconciliation and restitution. This approach involves:

- Victim-Offender Mediation: Facilitating dialogue between victims and offenders to discuss the impact of the crime and agree on a resolution.
- Community Conferencing: Bringing together affected parties, including community members, to collectively address the harm and develop a plan for restitution.
- Restitution and Reparation: Ensuring that offenders take responsibility for their actions and make amends to the victims and the community.

Evidence-Based Policing represents a transformative approach to law enforcement, grounded in scientific research and data-driven decision-making. By adopting strategies such as hotspot policing, focused deterrence, problem-oriented policing, community policing, and restorative justice, police agencies can enhance their mission. Through collaboration, continuous improvement, and a commitment to best practices, law enforcement can build safer and more resilient communities.

MGC offers mitigation funds to help address crime and disorder in communities that host casinos. These funds could be used to fund further research, buy technology and provide training to officers and crime analysts. Departments should pursue these available opportunities for leveraging crime prevention and Evidence-Based Policing strategies to address crime problems they are experiencing. MGC and the Plainridge Park Casino should be seen as a viable partner in reducing crime and victimization.

Conclusion

This report investigates the degree to which the Plainridge Park Casino impacts levels of crime in the region. These findings suggest that specific crime theories and effective strategies that pracademics,[7] chiefs, and area commanders may want to incorporate when addressing crime could be used in these hotspots. Evidence-Based Policing has identified and continues to identify best practices, including Hotspot Policing, Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) projects and Focused Deterrence initiatives that are proven to be effective at preventing crime and apprehending offenders. Additional information about these promising approaches to crime fighting and crime prevention can be found at George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy[8].

It provides an in-depth analysis of the impact of gambling on public safety in Massachusetts, focusing on crime trends in the Plainridge Casino region from 2010 to 2023.   This analysis clearly shows that crime and disorder is not directly impacted in the immediate area around the Plainridge Park Casino. The spatial and temporal analysis does not demonstrate a link between crime and casinos. It does not fully address whether offenders in subsequent hotspots throughout the region are frequent patrons of the casino or committing these crimes to fund their gambling.

Additional micro-hotspot analysis needs to be conducted to better understand the regions high density crime areas. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies, effective regulatory strategies, and the social and psychological dimensions of gambling to better understand and mitigate any relationship between specific criminals and casinos.

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[7] A person whose career spans the boundaries of academia and practice (Posner, 2009).
[8] https://cebcp.org/evidence-based-policing/the-matrix/

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