

Views and Perspectives of Springfield Hispanic Residents Towards the MGM Casino, their Homes, Community and Neighborhoods

A Report to the Massachusetts Gaming Commission

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Introduction

- The goal of the study was to examine the impact of a casino on housing-related issues in Springfield, Massachusetts, with a focus on the Hispanic/Latino community.
- A Community Research Team (CRT) comprising 11 residents, N2N staff, and JSI technical assistance providers guided the research strategy.
- The study was conducted in four phases: Discovery, Community Engagement, Data Collection and Analysis, and Dissemination.

Discovery Phase

- The Discovery phase of the study included contractual negotiations, a kickoff meeting, program staff hiring, IRB approval, and key stakeholder identification. Additionally, the research protocol and technical assistance plan for data analysis were developed during this phase.

Community Engagement Phase

- During the Community Engagement phase of the study, a Community Research Team (CRT) was recruited and trained in the basics of research, a governance structure was created, stakeholders were introduced to housing issues in Springfield related to the casino, and research questions were finalized

Data Collection and Analysis Phase

- During the Data Collection and Analysis phase, the CRT used a range of data collection strategies, including a web-based survey, and in-depth interviews and/or focus groups.
- Quantitative data were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics and examined for variations by demographic variables.
- Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes.

Data Collection and Analysis Phase

- We collected 290 surveys, conducted 63 interviews, and analyzed GIS data on gun violence incidents occurring between 2010 and 2020 in Springfield, MA.
- The study collected information about the participants' age, ethnicity, place of birth, race, language, number of years living in Springfield, MA. and zip code, among other things.

Dissemination Phase

- During the Dissemination phase, findings were presented to the community through data visualization charts and other means.
- Recommendations for addressing housing-related issues in Springfield were also developed and shared with relevant stakeholders.

Survey Findings

- The typical participant was Spanish-speaking, Hispanic, born in Puerto Rico, aged 46.2 years and living in a rental apartment in zip code 01105.

Findings: Neighborhood Indicators

Community members living in zip code 01105 thought social problems got better, while those living in 01103 thought problems got worse.

Finding: A tale of two zip codes

Participants living in zip code 01103 perceived that social conditions worsened, while those in 01105 perceived social conditions to have improved after the casino opened.

- Prostitution
- Drug selling
- Drug use
- Fighting
- Vandalism
- Gun violence
- Disorderly conduct
- Loitering
- Gang Activity
- Truancy (kids not in school when they should be)
- Underage drinking
- Using weapons
- HIV and AIDS
- Lack of resources for young people
- Lack of afterschool programs

Findings: Birthplace

Birthplace was not significantly associated with perceptions of social problems.

Findings: Home ownership

Homeowners thought social problems got better after the arrival of the casino, while renters tended to see things as staying the same.

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Neighborhood Perceptions

- The research found that neighborhood indicators such as safety, quality of life, and rental affordability were positively and significantly related to improved social conditions.

Interviews with Neighbors of the Casino

- Interviews with over 60 neighbors of the casino revealed a nuanced perspective, highlighting both positive and negative aspects of the casino's presence.
- Positive aspects included job creation, entertainment, and improved physical appearance of the neighborhood, while negative aspects included crime shifts and concerns about criminalization.

Findings: Casino perception

They were appreciative of the number of job opportunities created and the vast improvement of the physical environment surrounding the casino:

It impacted like I said by providing jobs, you know, stable income, providing for the families to pay bills, you know if they were to build it somewhere else, they could've built the lower income housing and persuade their workers that work for them to live there

Findings: Casino perceptions

They attribute to the casino the increase in rental and housing prices, a higher police presence that might lead to criminalization, and pointed out that the police tends to prioritize responses to incidents in the casino over what occurs in the community.

Findings: Casino perception

The casino presence results in gentrification.

“Well because in my mind their displacing everybody and everybody has nowhere to go now because is going up prices and can't be good for the market, right? Very negatively. The Casino has caused a lot of gentrification in Springfield in the downtown area because its right to downtown in Main Street.”

Findings: Crime perception

- While some residents feel more secure due to increased foot traffic and police presence, others remain concerned about the potential increase in crime and the influx of outsiders into their neighborhood.

Findings: Crime perception

Some interviewees said having police around doesn't always make them feel safer.

Findings: Crime perception

So it's interesting because we are supposed to feel safer because the Casino brought more cops and you don't feel safer. The fact we have more doesn't make you feel safer

Findings: Crime perception

Participants acknowledged that crime existed before the casino opened.

Findings: Crime perception

...I am going to tell you the truth, the 31 years that I have been living here and this area is one of the poorest. I live in the historic area, which is just a little bit. But around where I live, which is Union St, which is School St, I haven't seen a big change in terms of crime. There have always been prostitutes on the corner for the 31 years that I have been here. There have always been drug dealings and the police have their time to clean up all that and there is time when you have to fight with the police so that they come back to clean up again.

Findings: Crime

Some participants stated that crime has increased, others that it has stayed the same, and a portion feel that crime has decreased.

Some people, including CRT members, thought that crime had moved to other places.

Findings: Crime perception

The results of a GIS-analysis commissioned for this study confirmed that crime incidents cluster throughout the city and that, indeed, over the 10-year period, they have shifted away from the casino.

Findings: Sense of belonging and quality of life

The study found that those residents with a strong sense of belonging were more satisfied with the quality of life in the community and perceived that those social conditions improved after the casino opened its doors.

Conclusion

A sense of community membership entails sentiments of inclusion, which result in feelings of social and emotional support.

Recommendations

Politicians and stakeholders should consider investing in resources that enhance social circumstances in locations where locals view conditions to have deteriorated since the casino's opening, such as zip code 01103.

The study collected information about the participants' age, ethnicity, place of birth, race, language, number of years living in Springfield, MA. and zip code, among other things.

Based on these results, we suggested that more money be put into resources to help build communities, such as education, leisure, and public safety.

Recommendations

The following are some examples of educational and communal spaces that benefit the community:

- Community centers are places where people can gather for social, educational, and recreational activities.
- They can offer various programs and services, such as after-school programs, sports leagues, fitness classes, and job training.
- Libraries are important educational resources that provide access to books, technology, and educational programs.

Recommendations

The following are some examples of educational and communal spaces that benefit the community:

- Parks and recreational spaces provide physical activity, socialization, and relaxation opportunities.
- They can include playgrounds, sports fields, hiking trails, and picnic areas.
- Youth programs offer opportunities for young people to develop skills, explore interests, and connect with peers.
- Adult education programs offer lifelong learning and skills development opportunities.
- They can include classes on topics such as computer skills, language learning, and financial literacy.

- Thank you. Please feel free to ask any questions. 😊

