

The Impact of Environmental & Socio-demographic Factors on Crime Rates in the Midtown North Precinct

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Abstract

Crime in New York City has always been a constant problem in our society, especially in large cities New York City. New York is so large that focusing on crime in the entire city is nearly impossible. Taking a meso-level approach, this project will look directly at crime rates of grand larceny, grand larceny of motor vehicle, robbery, and felony assault in the Midtown North Police Precinct located in Manhattan. By looking at these crime rates, socio-demographic factors, and environmental factors, it will explain why the crime rate is so high in the Midtown North Precinct and possibly show ways to prevent crime in the area. This research had found that both socio-demographic and environmental factors have caused the problem of such high crime rates.

Introduction

Crime happens in our society on a daily basis, which means crime rates are always changing. In 'The City that Never Sleeps' this is no exception; New York City is always moving and always changing causing crime to do the same. Location is a key factor to how high or low a crime rate is. Crime in one location of a city; more specifically New York City, can differ from precinct to precinct. This research will focus on crime, crime hotspots, location, and crime prevention methods in the Midtown North Precinct in New York City. A reason that crime can be high in an area is due to crime attractors and crime generators. A crime attractor is a place offers opportunities to criminals, for example a drug house. A crime generator is a place that attracts large amounts of people that has nothing to do with crime or criminal activities, for example a bar or sports venue. There are large amounts of crime attractors and generators in the Midtown North Precinct due to high profile areas it contains; Columbus Circle, St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Theater District, Radio City Music Hall, and Rockefeller Plaza. These are very popular areas not only for tourists, but locals of Manhattan who work and live in the area. Social Disorganization can play a major role as to why crime rates in a society are high. Social disorganization is a community's disagreement on common values. Not realizing the same strict of values, results in the ineffectiveness of social control in that community. Lack of social control can lead to crime in an area, more specifically in the Midtown North Precinct.

Methodology

This research looks at crime rates, social disorganization factors and crime hotspots in the Midtown North Precinct. First the crime rates in the Midtown North Precinct and the borough of Manhattan must be calculated and compared. The crime rates focused on the time period from January 2018-December 2018, these rates were found on maps.nyc.gov. To find this data, the site looks at the number of crimes per 1000 residents in the precinct. Here the data shows crime rates off burglary, felony assault, grand larceny, grand larceny of motor vehicle, murder, rape, and robbery (Figure 1). When looking at social disorganization, I researched four socio-demographic variables, All Families Average Years in Public Housing, Religious Buildings, School Suspensions, and Vacant Land. This data was found on infoshare.org.ez.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/main/directip.aspx. Lastly, the research of crime hotspots in the area was needed. The hotspots were shown on maps.nyc.gov. This site gave the exact location of a specific crime and its hotspots within the Midtown North Precinct.

Phases of Research

1. Crime Rates

Crime Types	Burglary	Felony Assault	Grand Larceny	Grand Larceny of Motor Vehicle	Murder	Rape	Robbery
Crime Rates for Midtown North Precinct	3.42	3.14	34.68	0.57	0.056	0.39	2.4
Crime Rates for Manhattan Borough	1.02	2.91	14.9	0.49	0.03	0.26	1.54

Figure 1. Shows the crime rates of specific crimes within the Manhattan Borough and the rates within the Midtown North Precinct. Data from maps.nyc.gov

The data of Figure 1 shows that the each crime rate in the precinct is higher than the boroughs (Manhattan). Each crime rate is higher in the precinct than in the borough. This means that in the Midtown North Precinct all of these crimes are a problematic.

2. Socio-Demographic Variables

In this research there were four socio-demographic looked at to determine why crime may be so high in the Midtown North Precinct. This data was found on infoshare.org.ez.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/main/directip.aspx. The variables studied were All Families Average Years in Public Housing (implicit decimal), Religious Buildings, School Suspensions, and Vacant Land. One can say that the Midtown North Precinct area is a socially disorganized neighborhood because of the high rate of families living in public housing; implying that there is poverty in the area. According to the concepts of the social disorganization theory, poverty makes it difficult to address social problems in the area. The social disorganization theory shows those in social disorganized neighborhoods often move away from the area and they do not invest in the community. Due to this, religious buildings and other community centers, receiving little funding. Students are a large part of their community, but if students are 'doing bad' and having problems in school, they are not helping the community succeed. This can cause social disorganization. Vacant lots can literally separate communities; leading to social cohesion being disrupted. The structure of a neighborhood can be affected, literally. People can become socially isolated and their living conditions can be poor due to lots.

3. Crime Hotspots

For the final data collection, crime hotspots within the Midtown Precinct was looked at. The data was collected from maps.nyc.gov. This data looked at 5 crime hotspots within the Midtown North Precinct. Each of these hotspots were associated with a certain type of crime. There were four environmental facts that were used to to give reason as to why this area is a crime hotspot; those facts are street lights, or lighting in the area, population in the area, public transportation, such as buses, subways, and taxis/Ubbers, and construction sites. The following are the crime type and hotspot looked at;

1. Grand larceny, W54th Street & 9th Ave
2. Grand Larceny of a Motor Vehicle, W48th Street-W49th Street and 11th Avenue
3. Robbery, W50th Street & 8th Ave
4. Robbery, W52nd Street-W53rd Street & 7th Ave
5. Felony Assault, W50th Street & 9th Ave.

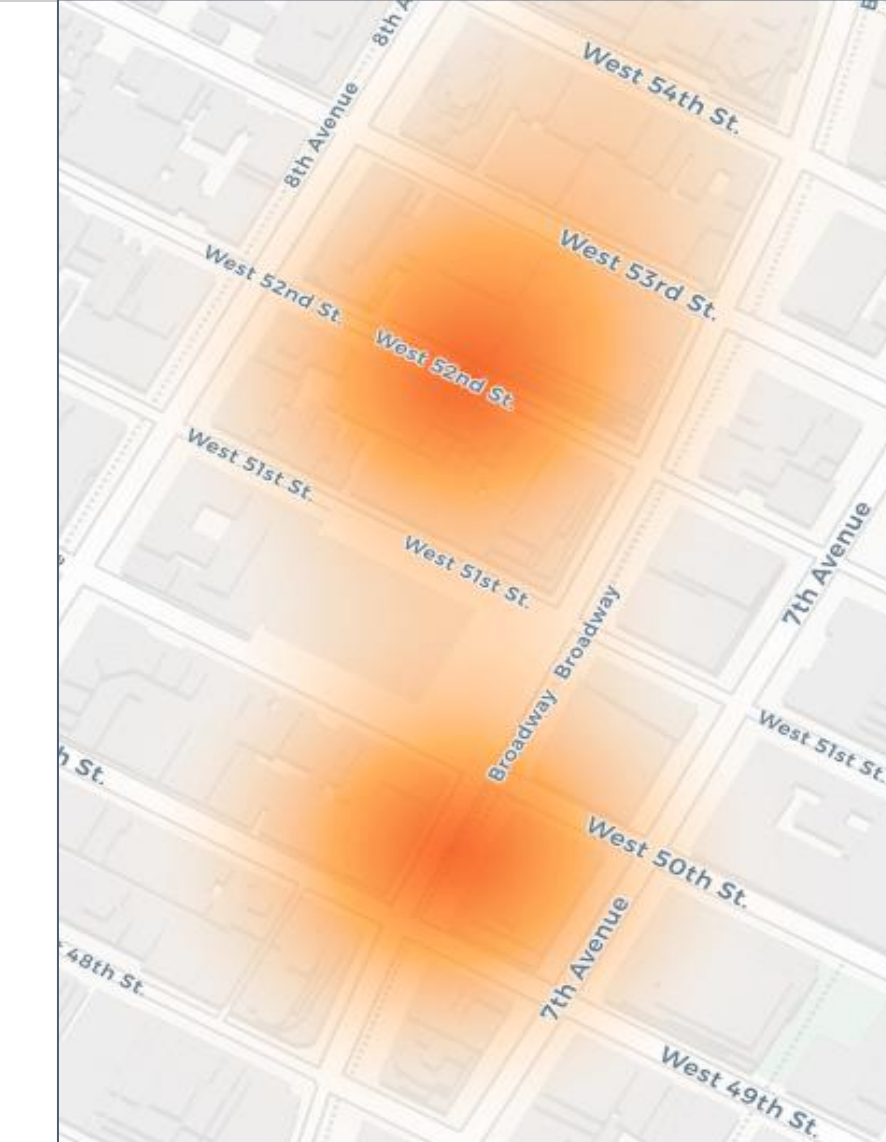
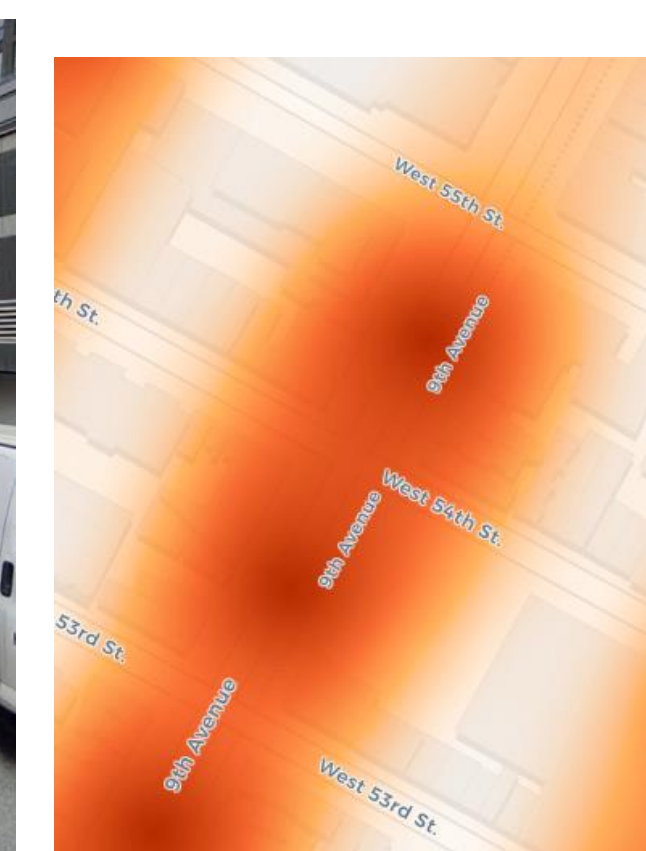
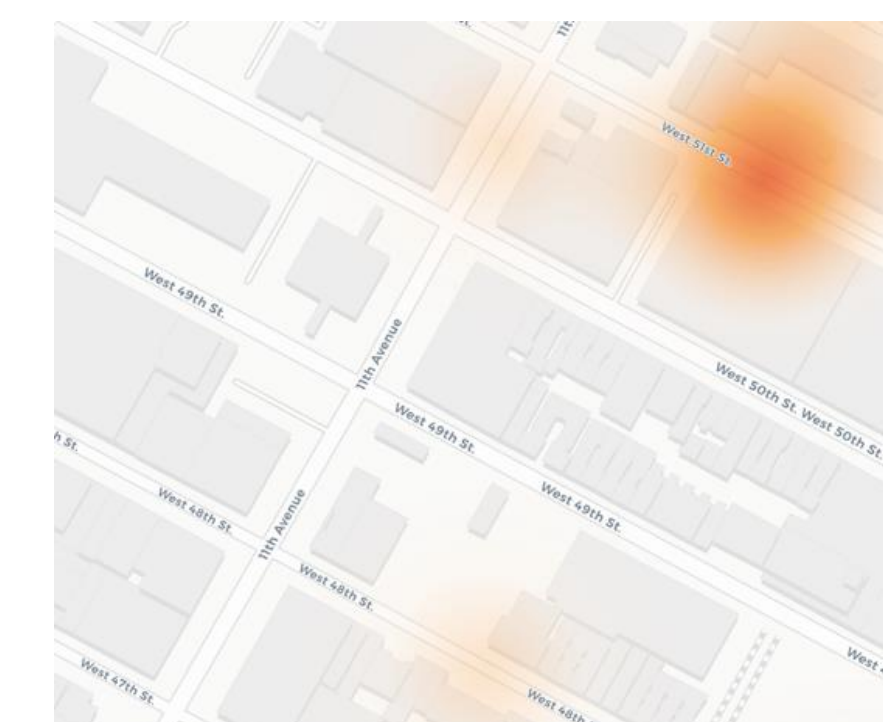


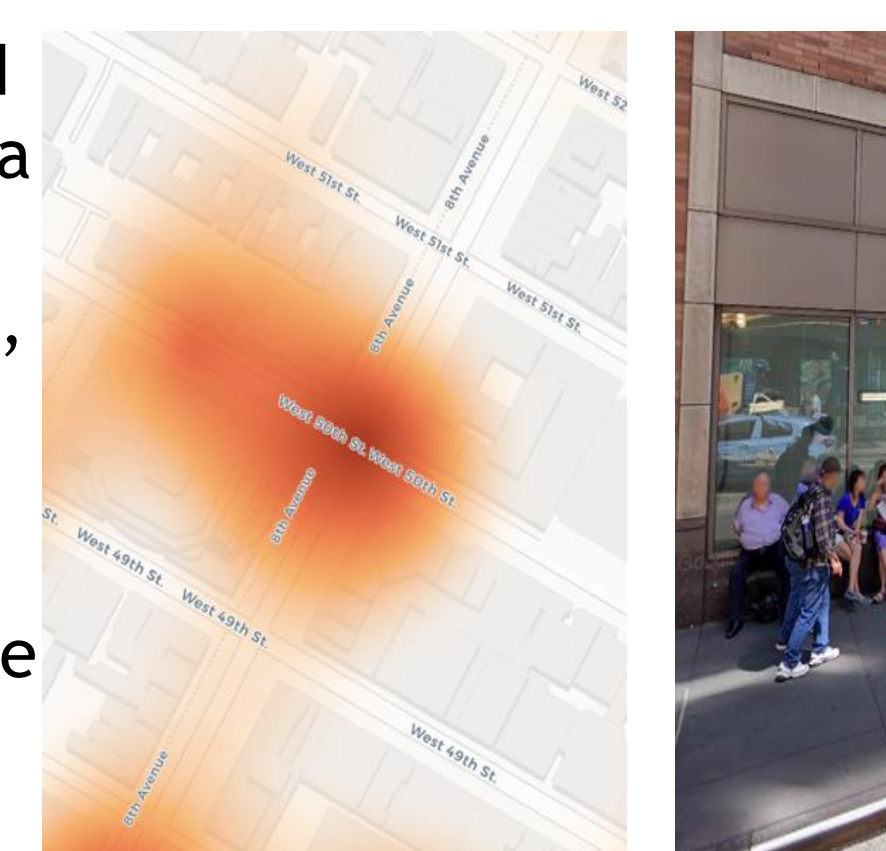
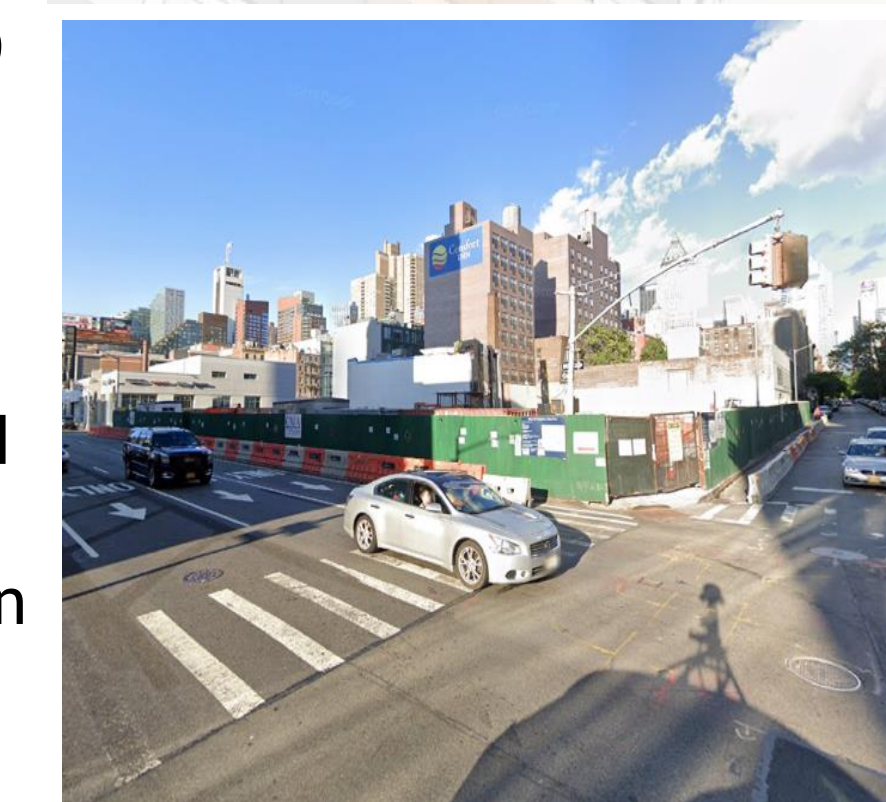
Figure 2. 2 Burglary Hotspots in the Midtown North Precinct Data from maps.nyc.gov



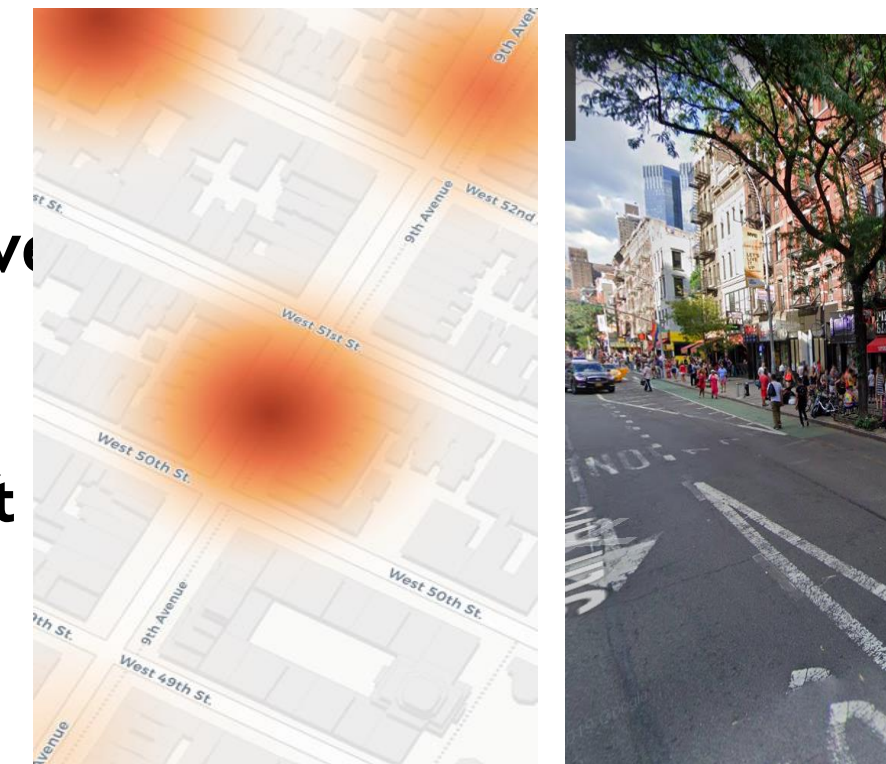
<- Figures 3 & 4. Shows (1) grand larceny hotspot and no streetlights within the block.



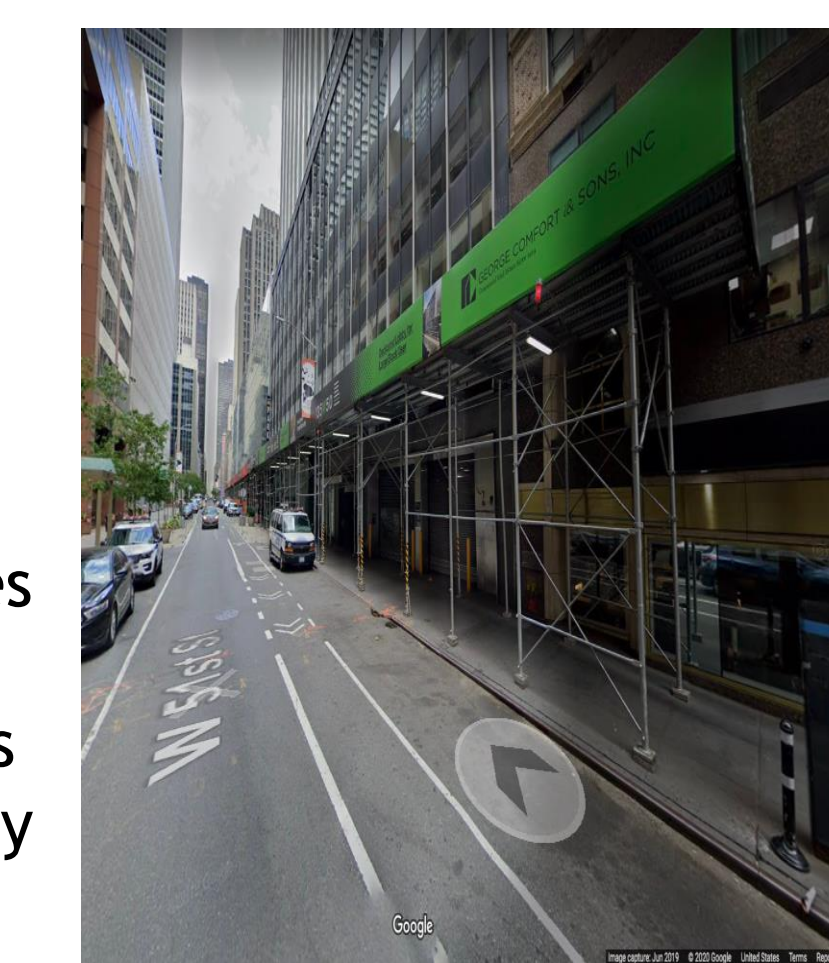
Figures 5 & 6. Shows (2) grand larceny of motor vehicle hotspot and a construction site. ->



Figures 7 & 8 .Shows (3) robbery hotspot and subway station (public transportation).



<- Figures 9 & 10. Shows (5) felony assault hotspot and high population



Figures 11 & 12 .Shows (4) robbery hotspot and construction site.

While for each hotspot the environmental factor can be specific for the reason this area is a hotspot, there were reoccurring themes throughout and those are stated below.

1. Streetlights -The lack of street lights can be a reason an area is hotspot. Especially at night, the block can become very dark, making it easy for those committing crimes without being identified by the victim or bystanders in the area. In each hotspot there were about 2 street lights on each corner, but they were focused on the actual street, not the sidewalk. However, there are no street lights located within the block. If a block is darker, it may be more prone to crime because it gives a greater chance of not being seen going in and out of a building; ultimately 'getting away' with the crime.
2. Population -The hotspot areas looked at either have a very high population or a very low population. You can tell the population of the hotspot by seeing the amount of people present, and by the amount of tourist areas or office businesses. For low population areas, there is less foot traffic. With less foot traffic, it makes it easy for criminals to commit their crimes without being seen. High population areas attract crowds and tourists, some who know the area, and some who don't. High population in this area is important because it gives a wide range of potential victims who will have their guard down, especially if they don't know the area. Large amounts of people not knowing the area, they might ask questions to strangers or stop on sidewalks, giving them a greater chance of becoming victims of crime.
3. Public Transportation -Many times, when one exits or enters a bus, taxi, or Uber, people will have their guard down, making them more vulnerable to become victims. Each hotspot showed either a bus stop, or subway station in the area. The use of buses and bus stops can contribute to the hotspot as well. It is often thought that poorer people will take the public bus and they can be victims to grand larceny, or be the ones who commit it. Those in need may have more motivation to commit crimes compared to those who are more wealthy. Bus stops, especially those with benches (like the two on this block), are also places where many homeless individuals will set up their 'beds' for a night or long period of time. Homeless individuals may be more inclined to commit crimes because they are in need and will do whatever it takes to survive.
4. Construction sites--Construction sites can be scaffolding over a sidewalk or a lot that is blocked off and being worked on. Each hotspot had at least one construction site. These sites are important to the hotspot area because they can cause blind spots while walking and cause blind spots for those committing crimes to hide out in. Having blind spots while walking under the scaffolding or near the lot can be a place where criminals can find their targets, especially if they are not paying attention or are not seen from a clear view of the pedestrian. This can be more common at night while the walkers view is compromised. Construction sites at night often have dark areas on the sidewalks and near the lots. These areas can become 'sketchy' places due to the darkness and because there many people hanging out, drinking and/or doing drugs. Those walking by may be victims of crime because they are seen as easy targets at nights.

Prevention/Discussion

Prevention methods based off my research can be more surveillance in areas like public transportation, and construction areas. There should also be more officers on foot in areas that have shown to had a high population due to tourist attractions. Lastly streetlights should be added along the sidewalks as well so pedestrians can walk safely and with out fear. Communities that show disorganization also need help. With help, like funding and community outreach programs, from the city and state government, communities that suffer from social disorganization can be saved from crime and flourish.

Based off this research, crime is a problem in the Midtown North Precinct. Factors that are both socio-demographic and environmental are both to blame for the problem. As long as these factors and variables are still being practiced, the Midtown North Precinct communities will still high crime rates.

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