Lancaster Safety Coalition - Public Safety Case Story

Lancaster citizens transform city safety with open platform video technology

July 2025

Despite its modest size, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, faced big-city problems by the late 1990s: open-air drug markets, double-digit homicide rates, and declining neighborhoods. In response, then-Mayor Charlie Smithgall convened the Lancaster Crime Commission, uniting business leaders and residents to reclaim community safety — a collaboration that would later harness the power of open platform video technology to help transform the city.

What began as a grassroots response to rising crime evolved into one of the nation's most innovative community-supported video security networks. The Lancaster Safety Coalition (LSC) emerged as a non-profit organization separate from law enforcement but working collaboratively with police to enhance public safety through video monitoring powered by open platform video management software (VMS).

Customer
Lancaster Safety Coalition

Milestone products
XProtect® video management software (VMS)

Integrations
Health Utility Monitor (HUM®), multiple sensors, tracking, Bridge to XProtect (BTX®), Vaidio® AI Vision, digital evidence delivery

Location
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Devices
170 4K i-PRO quad-sensor cameras, 680 video streams Device Map (DMap®)

Partner
App-Techs Corporation

Challenge: urban core under threat

Crime had hollowed out Lancaster's downtown. Businesses shuttered, residents began moving out of the city, and a culture of fear silenced witnesses, creating a vicious cycle of unsolved crimes and eroded public trust. Technologically, the Coalition's early system of DVRs and analog PTZ cameras couldn't scale as needed, sometimes limiting the coalition's ability to provide comprehensive coverage and reliable evidence for law enforcement.

Solution: collaborative technology ecosystem

To rebuild trust and safety, the Lancaster Safety Coalition (LSC) turned to a flexible, future-proof foundation: Milestone XProtect open platform video management software (VMS). Its open architecture allowed seamless integration of best-in-class cameras, servers, monitoring software and analytics, providing a critical advantage for scaling city-wide while adapting to new challenges over time.

Systems integrator App-Techs designed a comprehensive solution incorporating approximately 170 4K, quad-sensor cameras from i-PRO, positioned strategically throughout Lancaster City's neighborhoods and downtown. This brought together multiple technologies, including camera hardware, server infrastructure, monitoring software and data analytics, into a cohesive system that could evolve with the organization's needs while maintaining operational simplicity for LSC staff.
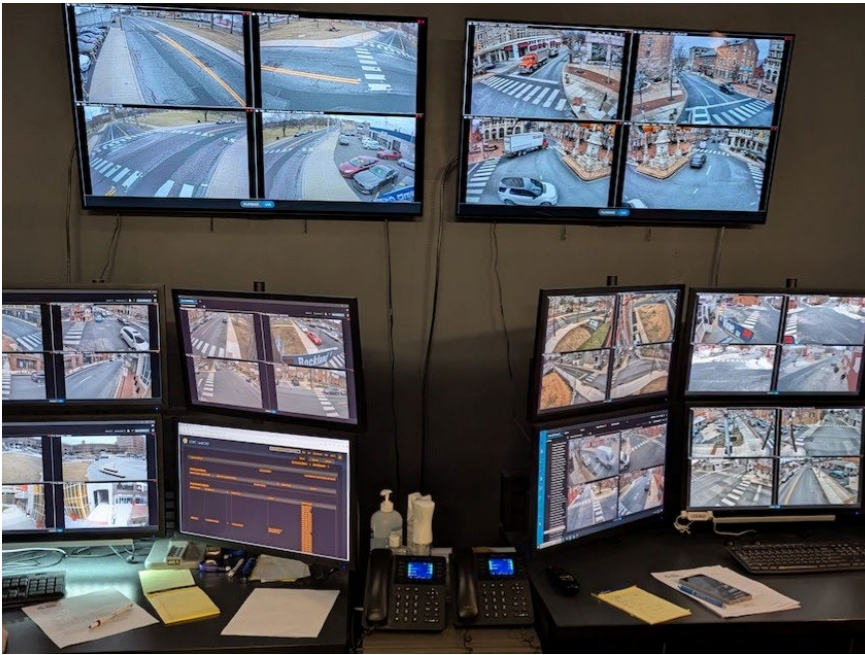
Results: from evidence to revival

The XProtect VMS has helped transform Lancaster's safety landscape. The results speak for themselves: annual homicides plummeted from 10–15 then to just two, and the availability of critical video evidence soared from 55% to over 90%. In 2023 alone, LSC operators provided live video support to 911 dispatchers during more than 4,100 incidents, strengthening rapid response and case closure rates.

Beyond crime reduction, Lancaster's downtown has experienced remarkable economic revitalization, with once-empty streets now thriving with pedestrian activity.

"When we got involved, we saw an opportunity to develop a system that could truly scale with their needs. We've built a solution with 12 recording servers, a failover server, and a management server, all optimized to handle the extraordinary volume of data throughput these cameras generate."

Dan Fritsch, President, App-Techs

Technical infrastructure: built for performance

The technical foundation of LSC's system goes well beyond typical surveillance deployments. At its core, Milestone XProtect runs on a sophisticated server environment designed and maintained by App-Techs.

This infrastructure supports an immense amount of network traffic. The system processes approximately 680 video streams at 4K resolution, from multi-sensor cameras, all operating 24/7. To meet this demand, App-Techs manages a fiber network with strategic distribution points throughout the city, aggregating into a 10-gigabit backhaul and core network switching fabric.

App-Techs' Health Utility Monitor (HUM) software, developed over the past ten years, continuously monitors all XProtect servers, software, devices and network components, sending heartbeats every five minutes along with telemetry about system health. This proactive approach alerts for immediate response to any technical issues before they affect operations.

The Milestone XProtect open platform video management system currently supports more than 13,000 different security devices from more than 700 of the industry's leading manufacturers. Technology Partners include providers of network video cameras, cloud technologies, access control, alarm and detection systems, video analytics, GPS technology, emergency call boxes, a wide range of sensor edge devices, and much more.

Our HUM monitoring software is thoroughly integrated with XProtect. If problems arise, such as Windows errors, filesystem corruption, internal XProtect faults, wireless network noise, cameras dropping offline, or various devices having issues, we receive near-real-time notifications and can proactively respond."

Dan Fritsch, President, App-Techs

◆ milestone

A community transformed

The system operates as a force multiplier for local police, with officers frequently collaborating with operators on high-level activities such as drug investigations and warrant service. Law enforcement regularly visits the LSC office to review video evidence, though they cannot directly access or control the system.

For evidence sharing, App-Techs created a digital evidence delivery system that maintains strict chain-of-custody protocols. This file-sharing system allows LSC operators to compile, document, and securely transfer video evidence to law enforcement personnel through an efficient, browser-based interface.

The system's effectiveness has changed investigation dynamics, with operators able to track suspects across multiple camera views. In one remarkable case, LSC operators tracked a shooting suspect from the crime scene back to their residence within 15 minutes, leading to an immediate arrest.

Advanced integration and expansion

Lancaster Safety Coalition continues to leverage the open platform capabilities of Milestone XProtect to expand functionality. App-Techs has developed a mapping system called Device Map (DMap) that integrates with XProtect to track calls from the County 911 center, displaying incident locations on a map and enabling operators to instantly access cameras at those locations.

"When other communities come in looking at our success, they always want to talk about money and cameras. I tell them your first step is determining, as a community, you've had enough. Because if you can't coalesce around the notion that you've had enough of how it's been, you can't make it into something different.

If you go downtown now on most any day of the week, the restaurants and businesses are hopping. There are people out taking ownership of the community again, and that's really great to see."

Tim Miller, Executive Director, LSC

While LSC has been selective about which analytics to implement, the system is prepared for rapid deployment of additional capabilities when needed. App-Techs created a custom integration [Bridge to XProtect](#) (BTX) between [Vaidio's AI Vision Platform](#) and XProtect, allowing for both real-time monitoring alerts and post-incident retroactive searches.
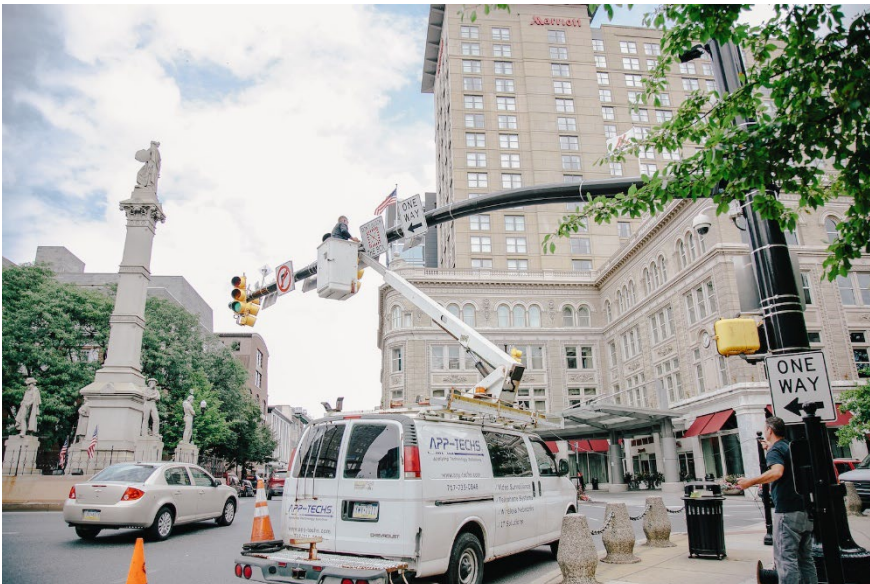
The organization plans to add approximately 20 additional cameras in the next two years, which will be their largest geographic expansion since 2009. These new cameras will focus on areas that still face safety challenges, consistent with LSC's belief that 'quality of life should not be determined by your street address.'

A blueprint for community-led safety

Lancaster's transformation is now a blueprint for community-driven safety innovation. By pairing advanced open platform technology with a citizen-first approach, Lancaster Safety Coalition proved that small cities can reclaim their streets, rebuild trust, and thrive once again.

"What makes this project remarkable is the synergy between the technology partners and our community vision. The open platform from Milestone, the technical expertise from App-Techs, and our community-driven approach created a formula that's yielded extraordinary results. We've seen crime rates plummet, businesses return to downtown, and most importantly, neighbors reclaiming their streets. This isn't just about cameras, it's about using the right tools with the right partners to empower a community."

Tim Miller, Executive Director, LSC

Recognize the challenges?

Do you also need to see what is happening in your area, so you can respond in time?

Get in touch with us at milestonesys.com/book-a-demo/
and let's talk about what type of solution is right for you.