

## **Reinvent Albany Fact Sheet Re: Intro 984**

Reinvent Albany does not offer an opinion on this legislation, but makes this fact sheet available to the Council. Currently, crime data is open and embedded in interactive maps in hundreds of cities all across the country; there should be no significant policy hurdles to solve which have not already been solved in other cities. As far as the technology goes, during our research, we found a significant number of cities which share NYC's Socrata platform for open data. The Socrata platform is being used to publish crime data and map it in dozens of cities all across the country.

Whether crime data is made downloadable in bulk, as plain-text CSV files, or accessible through an API, we urge New York City to make its crime data available. Additionally, we strongly support taking advantage of the NYC Open Data Portal's mapping technology to not just make the data available, but to create an interactive map of crime data.

### **Crime Data Is Open Across America**

In fact, there are countless cities across the US which currently provide interactive maps for its residents. Large cities like Seattle, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Las Vegas, and hundreds of other cities are already taking this information and returning it to the public in the form of interactive maps for easy consumption.

Even cities which don't create interactive maps publish their crime statistics in an open format. With information in a machine-readable format, third-party developers can integrate this data into their own applications, or create wholly new maps. Cities like Atlanta, Baltimore, Denver, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Francisco, Washington DC and hundreds of other cities are already doing this and have been doing this for years.

### **Protecting Victim Privacy**

Among these cities, it is standard practice to protect the identity of victims of crimes by removing certain fields from the crime data, or otherwise anonymizing the data. The United States Department of Justice has published reports and best practices on protecting victim privacy in reported crime data since 2001. In

Chicago, Oakland, and the District of Columbia, addresses in crime data are not shown; instead, crimes are placed at the block level, and specific locations where crimes occurred are not identified.

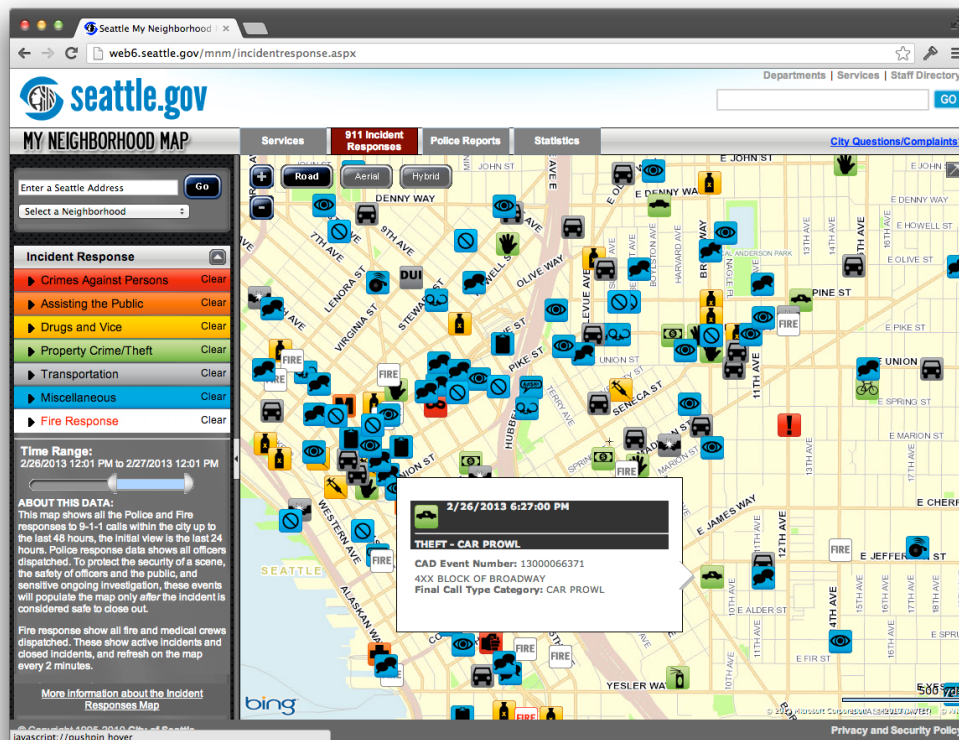
The United Kingdom has an interesting take on this. They have created a list of nearly 1 million mapping points, each of which correspond to at least 8 street addresses, and are located in the middle of a street, a shopping mall, or no address at all. Before crime data is released to the public, locations of crimes are moved to the nearest map point, to preserve the anonymity of the victims. This is an inventive middle ground between block level and actual street address.

### **The Importance of APIs**

Whichever way forward New York City chooses, one of the most important features any crime data site should have is an Application Programming Interface, or API. APIs are the sets of codes and keys which let programs talk to one another. The NYC Open Data Portal provides APIs for data sets, so programs don't need to download city data to provide it to users. Programs know how to "ask" the Open Data Portal for the data they need, and the Portal knows how to "reply" with the right information. Similarly, the MTA transit API lets programs "ask" when the next train is coming, instead of having a complete copy of train arrivals for the entire year.

The NYC Open Data Portal makes thousands of city data sets available via API; whatever method the city uses to make crime data available, be it map or bulk download, let developers access it through an API to maximize the public benefit of the data you're already releasing.

## City of Seattle Crime Map



## City of Chicago Crime Map

