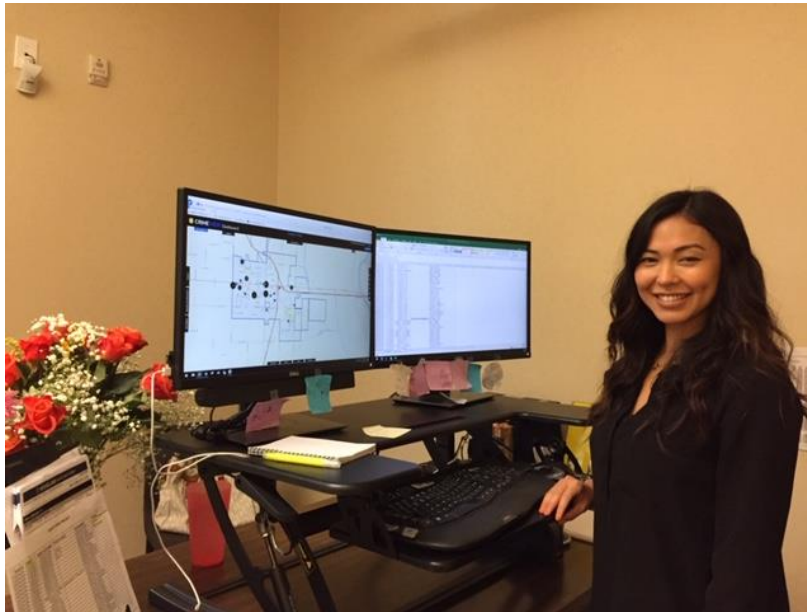# Modeling a Safe City

The Woodland Police Department (WPD) Crime Analysis Unit (CAU) never rests. This team uses a wide variety of data, statistics, and geographic information to track crime. They are able to help determine the best use of department resources by geographic area and time of day. This field of police investigation has been transformed over the past 20 years through data-driven decision making. This month the CAU lead took time to talk about how their unit implements these innovative trends in law enforcement.

Elissa Alferez, the WPD Crime Analyst, can be found amidst her multiple screens in the Investigations Division most days. Her typical day begins with a review of the reported incidents, 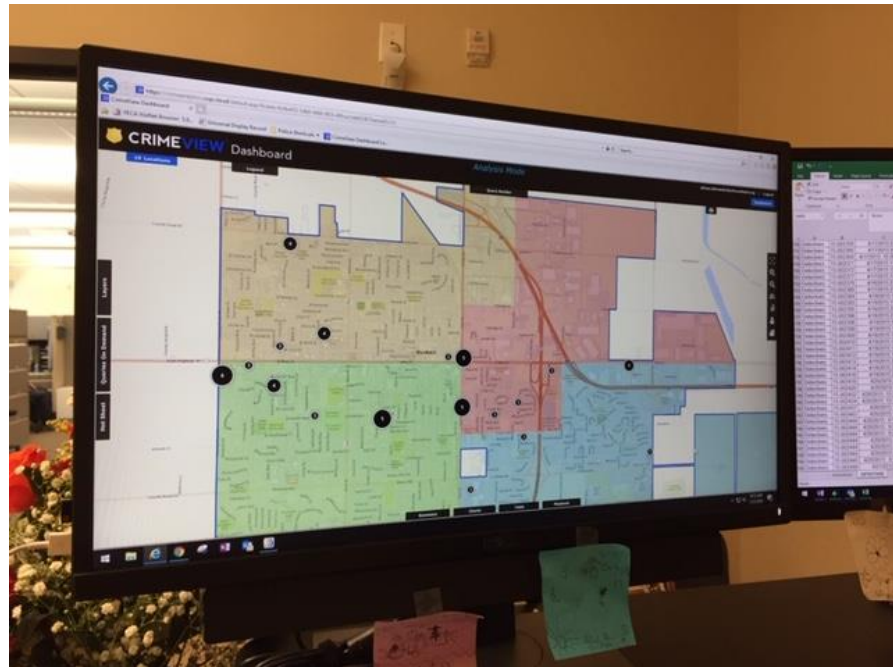calls for service, and field interview data gathered overnight to look for patterns and outliers. Like all analysts, she uses a combination of data and statistical analysis techniques and database and geographic information system skills to assist her search for any notable characteristics in the information. She regularly accesses multiple databases with detailed crime information, including one for the City of Woodland and one for Yolo County, so that the data is real time. The CAU accesses these and other networks to expand the pool of information regarding known offenders, especially those with a history of violence, to assemble valuable information about potential threats to the safety of Woodland citizens. After reviewing new information, she creates visual and quantitative summaries of Woodland's crime activity based on her analysis.

The results of her work can be seen throughout the department. Look at any of the overhead television screens, and you can see where she has identified crime hot spots in our community. The department uses this information to develop effective tactics and strategies to prevent and reduce crime. Our department leaders regularly report this information to the City Council or to the press to keep the public informed of how the

WPD is working with the community to maintain our safety. The WPD website also offers summary data for the past five days through the Crime Map section.

The WPD holds regular meetings to develop strategies based on this analysis. They were formerly called CompStat meetings, but are now called Woodland Analysis of Traffic, Crime, and High-Profile Offenders (WATCH) meetings. WATCH is a revision of the old CompStat system based on officer feedback to better address the WPD's mission of problem-oriented and community-focused policing. WATCH emphasizes how every member of the department uses the information to improve effectiveness. It includes four core components: timely and accurate intelligence, rapid allocation of resources, use of appropriate tactics, and follow-up procedures. Although the officers and leadership cannot meet now, the information is shared virtually. The information sharing allows our law enforcement staff to discuss and assess strategies used to address current problems.

To help someone interested in this area of law enforcement, Elissa offered some advice. A suitable crime analyst candidate should be organized and able to multitask, stay calm, and most importantly adhere to deadlines. The work is so central to creative policing, that a crime analyst is often asked to stop everything to develop profiles for a specific person using information such as their known associates or registered car. Elissa completed her Criminal Justice degree and was trained on the job to use database tools, geographic information systems, and statistical analysis techniques. The most rewarding event during her tenure was when she identified a crime pattern in a series of arsons. She said that it felt great to see participation from all the bureaus of WPD as well as the collaboration with local agencies to end the series of arsons. That is certainly community-focused policing in action! Thank you, Elissa for introducing the ViPs to the modern policing efforts that you support!