



State Center Police Department

Chief Jon Thomas
108 4th Street Southeast
State Center, IA 50247
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Dear prospective customers of Astra Security,

My name is Jon Thomas and currently I serve as the Police Chief for the City of State Center, Iowa. State Center is a community of 1,300 people with approximately one and a half square miles of property. State Center is located twenty minutes East of Ames, Iowa and fifteen miles West of Marshalltown, Iowa along the US Highway 30 corridor.

In 2020, I was introduced to a Veteran owned security company, Astra Security. The City of State Center as well as several local businesses already contracted with Astra Security for alarms and closed-circuit video monitoring of assets such as State Center's solar field, community parks, and public works building. The owner of the company, Oliver Keeling, is passionate about his business and compulsive about his customer service. Many businesses claim to have these qualities but as Oliver and I would work together, these qualities would become the foundation of our relationship.

Like many small communities in Iowa and the country for that fact, State Center does not have the resources to staff a 24-hours a day, 7 day a week police department. Even if State Center could afford it, officers can't be everywhere at the same time and officers are humans who need to sleep, eat, and sometimes fall ill and can't work his/her assigned shift. So as the Police Chief, how can I best protect my community and enhance officer efficiency on a sustainable budget.

Oliver and I met at the State Center Police Department in late 2020 and evaluated the town. There are seven points of access to State Center via established roadways including state highways, county pavements, and gravel roads. The initial goal was to cover all points of access with cameras, identify which patterns of behavior, identify which behavior may have criminal intent, and work smarter not harder. By identifying behaviors, the police department was able to direct our workforce to the appropriate shifts to address problems. After establishing the outer perimeter and through constant communication and development, additional cameras were added to enhance security in our business district and city buildings.

At first public response, which lasted two days, was "big brother" is watching. The reality is if there isn't a reason to look at the cameras, we don't. Our cameras don't issue citations and the video isn't stored by a third-party which incurs additional fees. We own the equipment; we own our video and we can access the video from our phones and laptops.

So how do we evaluate the value or judge the success of the project? The State Center Police Department has solved stolen vehicles cases, identified subjects involving damaged property of business owners in the



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downtown area, captured video evidence of numerous motor vehicle crashes, identified fraud relating to motor vehicle crashes and made two notable felony assault cases, one involving a shooting with a suspect from over 125 miles away and another an assault, relating to Snapchat, with a suspect from 60 miles away. The successful prosecution and evidence gathering speak for themselves, the number of actual hours of investigation which has been saved would be in the hundreds, ultimately saving the taxpayers thousands of dollars in wages. The return on actual monetary investment was realized by the start of the third year.

As an example of Oliver's commitment to customer service, on July 6th 2023, our cameras recorded a motor vehicle accident resulting in a fatality. While attempting to access the video I began experiencing difficulty and was unable to locate the video. My first call wasn't to an office or one of Astra's staff, my first call was to Oliver, who answered on the second ring. After explaining the problem, Oliver began walking me through the solution (while he was driving to State Center) just in case I couldn't get the issue resolved, he would be there quicker. Oliver was able to assist me remotely to locate and download the video and preserve the evidence. Oliver and his staff are available on weekends, on holidays, and in bad weather – I have yet to have a time when I couldn't reach a member of his staff or Oliver himself if I needed assistance with my safety.

It is my pleasure to recommend Astra Security to businesses and municipalities as a resource for their security needs. What was accomplished in State Center had never been attempted by Astra before but if you can imagine it and the technology exists to support it, Oliver and his team will work tirelessly to make it a reality.

Respectfully,

Chief Jon Thomas

State Center, Iowa