



LESSONS FROM DETROIT'S SHOTSTOPPERS COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Detroit's ShotStoppers Community Violence Intervention (CVI) program began in 2023 and provides ongoing and performance-based grants to community-based organizations focused on reducing gun violence. Community violence intervention is a community-centered, non-law enforcement approach that empowers community members to disrupt violence within their neighborhoods. The City's ShotStoppers program is part of a larger movement towards municipal involvement in CVI programs.

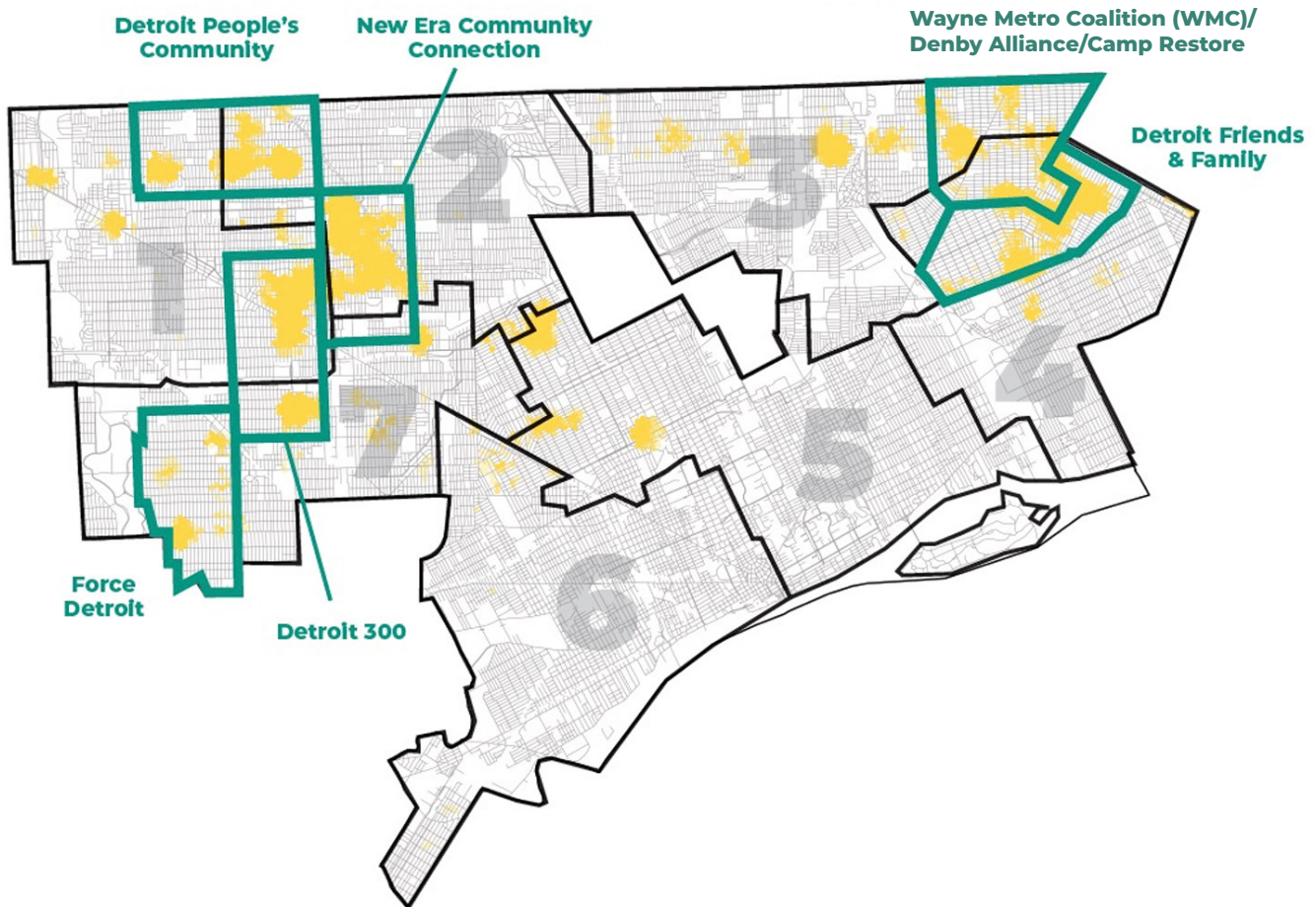
The ShotStoppers program funds selected community-based organizations, known as CVI teams, to develop and implement programs and activities to address violence in specific geographically defined "CVI zones," 3- to 5-square-mile areas of Detroit that have historically experienced high levels of gun violence. Teams work to reduce the number of homicides and non-fatal shootings in their respective designated zones using intervention strategies that they believe address persistent violence in the zone. The City coordinates shooting incident responses between the teams and the local police precincts and provides annual base funding to each CVI team to support its efforts; teams earn quarterly performance-based bonuses when their zones experience decreasing homicide and non-fatal shooting victimizations at a higher rate than the citywide average.

The City of Detroit partnered with Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan to evaluate the first two years of the program. Our evaluation drew on public safety data, administrative records, interviews, focus groups, and surveys to measure changes in violence and perceptions of public safety across the city and within the CVI zones and to identify key factors in program implementation.

KEY FINDINGS

- The CVI zones assigned to each team experienced decreases in homicides and non-fatal shootings from 2023 to 2025, with some areas outpacing the parts of the city not covered by the program.
- CVI teams used two distinct strategies: 1) individual interventions with individuals and groups at high risk of involvement with gun violence and 2) broader community engagement with resource provision.
- CVI teams depended heavily on the trust and credibility they developed with individuals at high risk of gun violence and with their broader zone communities.
- The City fostered these CVI team-level relationships of trust and credibility with its financial and administrative support coupled with a high degree of autonomy for the teams to adapt their programming to the on-the-ground conditions of their zones and neighborhoods.

FIGURE 1: MAP OF CVI TEAM AREAS AT START OF SHOTSTOPPERS (AUGUST 2023) WITH YELLOW INDICATING AREAS OF HISTORICAL GUN VIOLENCE



FINDINGS

All the CVI zones experienced reductions in non-fatal shootings and homicides during the program period both across their entire zone and in at least one hotspot within their zone that historically had high homicide and non-fatal shooting rates.

Reductions in non-fatal shootings and homicides started slowly in the first year, with the rest of the city outpacing the CVI zones. Looking at the second year of the program, when the CVI teams had solidified their programming and intervention strategies, the CVI zones outpaced the rest of the city with an overall decrease in their homicide victimizations of 33% and non-fatal shooting victimizations of 38% since the prior year, compared to the rest of the city's reductions of 12% and 26%, respectively. While a direct causal relationship between the interventions and the reduction in homicides and non-fatal shootings cannot be established, the trend is promising.

Three areas – notably those overseen by Force Detroit, New Era Detroit, and Detroit Friends & Family – either

consistently outpaced the non-CVI area of the city in decreases in homicides and non-fatal shootings or experienced reductions in violence in multiple hotspots or improvements in community perceptions of public safety. Importantly, the ShotStoppers evaluation still found almost all teams had ongoing violent crime activity in at least one hotspot within their target area, with new hotspots appearing in most. Robberies and motor vehicle thefts declined citywide during ShotStoppers, but the CVI zones didn't see significantly larger decreases than the rest of the city.

As measured by two representative surveys of Detroiters conducted in the first and second year of the program, residents' perceptions of crime and safety remained mostly unchanged during the ShotStoppers evaluation, with two exceptions. In the Force Detroit target area centered around Warrendale on the west side, community members reported statistically significant improvements in their perceptions of neighborhood safety between the first year to the second year of the program. Additionally, the CVI areas combined saw a significant decrease in the percentage of residents reporting hearing gunshots in year two of the program.

TABLE 1: HOMICIDE VICTIMS BY CVI YEAR AND PERCENTAGE CHANGE

	Homicide Victims by CVI Year				Percentage Change Between Time Periods			
	2 Yrs prior	Yr prior	Program Y1	Program Y2	Yr Prior vs 2Yrs Prior	Program Y1 vs Yr Prior	Program Y2 vs Y1	Program Y2 vs Yr Prior
Citywide	295	289	225	182	-2%	-22%	-19%	-37%
Non-CVI	208	206	149	131	-1%	-28%	-12%	-36%
CVI Total	87	83	76	51	-5%	-8%	-33%	-39%
D300	13	13	7	11	0%	-46%	57%	-15%
DFF	16	13	17	7	-19%	31%	-59%	-46%
DPC	16	10	12	11	-38%	20%	-8%	10%
Force Detroit	13	16	8	3	23%	-50%	-63%	-81%
New Era	9	10	13	4	11%	30%	-69%	-60%
WMC	20	21	19	15	5%	-10%	-21%	-29%

*The percent change cells are formatted on a red to green spectrum. The highest value (representing the largest increase) is the darkest shade of red. The lowest value (representing the greatest decrease) is the darkest shade of green. Values in between (from higher to lower) range from orange to yellow to light and dark green.

**Note: Small changes in numbers can lead to significant changes in percentage.

TABLE 2: NON-FATAL SHOOTING VICTIMS BY CVI YEAR AND PERCENTAGE CHANGE

	Homicide Victims by CVI Year				Percentage Change Between Time Periods			
	2 Yrs prior	Yr prior	Program Y1	Program Y2	Yr Prior vs 2Yrs Prior	Program Y1 vs Yr Prior	Program Y2 vs Y1	Program Y2 vs Yr Prior
Citywide	954	923	695	484	-3%	-25%	-30%	-48%
Non-CVI	644	624	431	319	-3%	-31%	-26%	-49%
CVI Total	310	299	264	165	-4%	-12%	-38%	-45%
D300	46	46	47	36	0%	2%	-23%	-22%
DFF	58	47	31	24	-19%	-34%	-23%	-49%
DPC	60	49	35	30	-18%	-29%	-14%	-39%
Force Detroit	26	43	29	23	65%	-33%	-21%	-47%
New Era	54	51	33	30	-6%	-35%	-9%	-41%
WMC	66	63	89	22	-5%	41%	-75%	-65%

*The percent change cells are formatted on a red to green spectrum. The highest value (representing the largest increase) is the darkest shade of red. The lowest value (representing the greatest decrease) is the darkest shade of green. Values in between (from higher to lower) range from orange to yellow to light and dark green.

The program's flexible structure encouraged neighborhood-level experimentation while offering essential support from the City, all built on an interlocking structure of trust and leadership.

Trust and credibility are the foundational building blocks for CVI programming, from the most basic interventions with individuals at high risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of violence to the most high-level cooperation between the CVI teams, the City, and the police department. The centrality of this hard-earned trust translated into City leadership

that empowers and trusts community-based groups, while also holding CVI teams accountable for violence-reduction outcomes. The program's flexibility has enabled adaptability and experimentation both for individual CVI teams in their designated zones and for the City's program administrators and their partners at the police department. Given the variety of program changes this adaptation and experimentation encouraged, communication among the partners became essential. Support from, and access to, top City leadership engendered trust and commitment among the CVI teams and with the police department, producing

a program environment primed for experimentation. This experimentation led to the creation of specialized roles on both the CVI teams and the City CVI staff that equipped the organizations with the skills to navigate the complex challenges inherent to CVI work. Examples include hiring female violence interrupters to recruit high-risk female participants and partnering with coaches and local sport organizations to offer active programming, especially for younger Detroit residents.

Program flexibility also contributed to complications in the development of the CVI teams' relationships with their police counterparts.

Some CVI teams cultivated close relationships with police precincts in their zones, while others kept their distance, relying on a standardized notification system to stay in touch as needed. However, the lack of standardization across teams may make this connection fragile. Without a clear structure, the program risks conflict that could undermine the deep mutual trust and credibility essential to its success. Designating a police department or precinct point person on each CVI team could help standardize communications and developing a set of standard protocols could clarify the CVI teams' independence from police investigations.

CVI teams used two distinct strategies: individual intervention and community engagement with resource provision.

Teams focused on individual intervention often followed a network approach: "shooters know shooters." As one CVI team leader put it:

"Once you get one high-risk individual, it only takes one, then you are in the gang. Because barbers know barbers, nurses know nurses, educators know educators. They're in the same networks. So the goal is if you are able to leverage your relationship with the high-risk, they'll bring others along and refer you and they'll educate you about the others. And that's the whole point of why we were so big on that."

These teams often hired full-time staff with local connections. Teams paired short-term intervention strategies, like conflict resolution and mentorship, with long-term supports like formal peer cohorts, workforce skill development, and food and housing assistance.

Teams focused on community engagement, specifically New Era, forged a distinctly different strategy. Their approach centered around activating communities through mobile block parties and holding resource fairs in disinvested areas dealing with high levels of violence. As a team leader explained it:

"[T]hat's really what our organization is based on: engagement, being able to build relationships and relate to people in a way that makes people feel comfortable and then also get valuable resources to people. Which is why we're always pushing for as many resources as we possibly can, and why this program works out so great, because now we do have an opportunity with a level of funding to get the certain resources that we might not have been able to obtain before. Now we have that option of doing that. So the program just helps put gas in the vehicle that we already have."

While most teams deployed some combination of individual intervention and community engagement, teams increasingly expanded their programming to include delivering resources directly to the broader community. However, first- and second-year surveys of residents indicate that most CVI teams had limited success with broader community engagement and buy-in. Additionally, teams lacked the capacity to consistently address issues like domestic/intimate partner violence, and most teams had restricted access to work in local schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF SHOTSTOPPERS

After two years as a pilot program funded with federal dollars, ShotStoppers has become a city- and state-funded program embedded in the City government as part of the new Mayor's Office of Neighborhood & Community Safety (MONCS). The program evaluation suggests several areas for continued improvement so ShotStoppers can continue to grow into a cornerstone of public safety in the city:

Continue institutionalizing CVI within the City government.

The City originally established ShotStoppers as a two-year program, using one-time federal American Rescue Plan Act funding. The program's temporary nature led to limitations in establishing long-term services and partnerships, such as the significant difficulties teams had in getting permission to launch school-based programming. Making the support of CVI work a more formal part of the City government will likely alleviate some of these limitations and encourage more transparency and accountability from both the City and its partners.

Refine performance measures to adjust for changing benchmarks.

As the program currently stands, teams' performance is tied to reductions in violence in their zones. However, in zones where the number of homicide and non-fatal shooting victimizations are in the single digits, reducing homicides and non-fatal shootings further becomes more difficult. The City should consider additional performance metrics that reward teams for maintaining low shooting rates or reducing other forms of crime to sustain the program's momentum.

Incentivize broader community engagement to encourage more sustainable community support for CVI. While most CVI teams only recently broadened their efforts to include broader community engagement, resident surveys show a real need to establish greater community-wide recognition and support of CVI efforts. Securing broader community support will be critical for the next stage of the program. As the CVI teams shift focus to tackling less extreme but more widespread versions of community violence, like school-based conflict, a solid foundation of community support can drive success.

Read the full program evaluation report: [Community Violence Intervention in Detroit: ‘Each of us has a role to play’](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam Stragand is the senior program manager for Poverty Solutions’ Detroit Partnership on Economic Mobility. This brief summarizes key findings from the full ShotStoppers evaluation report, which was authored by Stragand; Amanda Nothaft, director of data and analysis at Poverty Solutions; and John Bulat, a data and policy analyst at Poverty Solutions; with oversight from Principal Investigator Luke Shaefer, who is the Hermann and Amalie Kohn Professor of Social Policy and Social Justice at the University of Michigan. Numerous staff and students from Poverty Solutions and the Detroit Metro Area Communities Study contributed to the full report.