

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

THE SACRAMENTO SAFE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP: AN INITIAL PROGRESS REPORT

OVERVIEW

The Sacramento Safe Community Partnership (SSCP) came together in early 2010. Concerned about violence in Sacramento, leaders from Sacramento Area Congregations Together (a faith-based organizing non-profit commonly referred to as ACT), other faith-based community groups, the Sacramento Police Department (SPD), and the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) developed a local version of what's often referred to as Ceasefire. This report describes their efforts from launch late 2010 through 2011.

THE STRATEGY

The SSCP decided to root their strategy in Boston's well-known Ceasefire initiative. Central to the intervention are "call-ins," small town hall-style meetings with youth at highest risk of violence hosted by a range of partners that includes community members, young people formerly involved in violence, service providers, criminal justice agencies, a trauma nurse from the local hospital, and clergy leaders. During these meetings, this alliance of community leaders directly and respectfully shares a powerful anti-violence message with these youth. SSCP developed three operational components that complement the call-in communication efforts. These included the clergy-led "night walks" – described in more detail on page 3 – in the neighborhoods most impacted by violence, services and supports through SETA, and a strategic enforcement effort.

THE CHALLENGE

The SSCP worked closely with the California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC) to analyze serious violence in Sacramento and develop their strategy. Based on CPSC's analysis, the partners decided to focus on an ongoing conflict in the "Mack Road corridor" in south Sacramento. Sacramento's homicide rate has decreased steadily since it reached 50 homicides in 2006. Even so, as recently as 2009, the rate of serious violence in Sacramento remained almost double the state average. The residents of the many apartment complexes along Mack Road in south Sacramento experienced this violence in an immediate and intense way. Gang-related shootings made this collection of neighborhoods almost certainly the most dangerous in the city.

TIMELINE LEADING TO LAUNCH

The following timeline builds on several months of relationship building among clergy and other community stakeholders by ACT on issues affecting local youth.

January 2009: ACT launches the Sacramento Ceasefire taskforce to build public and political support for implementing Ceasefire.

June 2009: ACT and California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC) present Ceasefire model to city manager and police chief, securing initial support.

August 2009: SPD commits internal resources to planning and implementation of the strategy.

March 2010: Taskforce secures funding for implementation, organizes itself as the Sacramento Safe Community Partnership.

June 2010: Core partners hold 500-person “Community Action” at South Sacramento Christian Center, securing broad pastoral involvement and support of elected officials.

July 2010: Night walks and focused law enforcement efforts directed toward reducing the violence between two of the city’s most actively violent groups begin.

August 2010: Using CPSC’s in-depth analysis of violence in south Sacramento, SSCP tailors the Ceasefire approach to local needs and resources.

October 2010: SSCP convenes 300-person community event to introduce approach to working partners and residents. Street outreach workers are hired.

November 2010: Call-ins with youth and young adults at highest risk of violence begin.

EARLY IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation began in late summer of 2010 and “kicked off” with the convening of the first call-in in early November 2010. Over the next 14 months, the SSCP convened a dozen call-ins focused on the groups involved in the city’s most actively violent conflict. Over 200 young people have been invited to the call-ins, and of those invited, over 60 percent have attended.

The call-ins were held at locations important and familiar to the community, including the South Sacramento Christian Center and the Pannell Meadowview Community Center. The frequent and regular clergy-led night walks, the intensive service efforts overseen by SETA, and the partners’ close coordination with law enforcement agencies signaled the community’s commitment to reduce violence.

NIGHT WALKS AND LEADERSHIP FROM ACT AND THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Night walks are an opportunity for community leaders and residents to establish a presence in a high-risk area, demonstrate their concern for people at high risk of violence, build positive relationships with high-risk youth, and connect these youth to resources in their community. As one local pastor says, “these are not about conversion, they’re about conversation”.

ACT leaders began night walks in Sacramento in July of 2010, which were consistently held in South Sacramento every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Though led by clergy and faith-based leaders, night walks are also a way for lay leaders and residents to participate in a localized process of relationship building and violence intervention.

The impact and value of the night walks in Sacramento stem from their focus on relationship building with the highest risk individuals and groups in the highest risk places, and during the times of day when the risk of violence is highest.

MAKING A SAFER NEIGHBORHOOD

Figures 1 and 2 are density maps of shootings in the Mack Road corridor in south Sacramento, in particular, for the years 2010 and 2011. The point of intervention occurs near the end of 2010 and, as illustrated by the density map for 2011, the neighborhood benefitted from a significant drop in shootings.

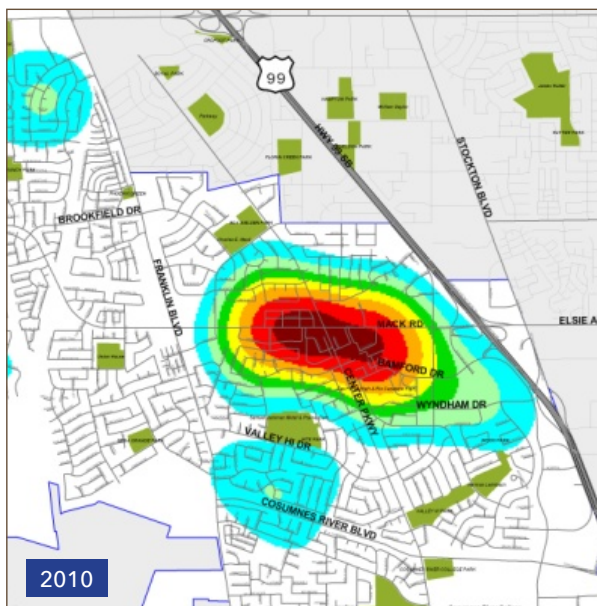


Figure 1

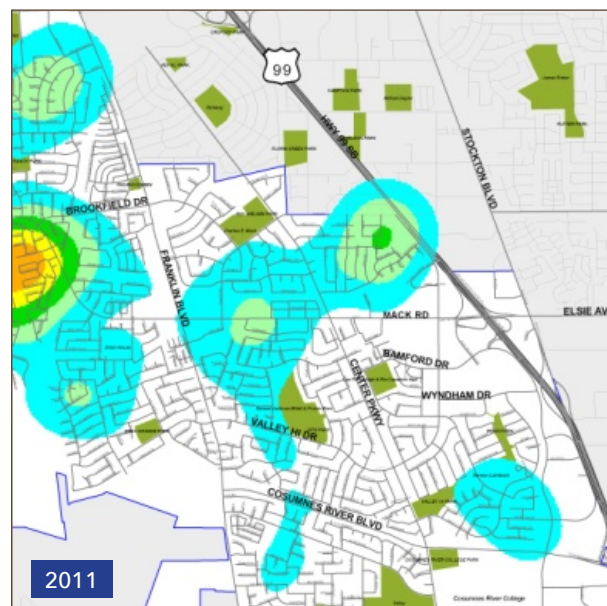


Figure 2

SSCP REDUCTIONS FAR OUTPACED THOSE IN THE REST OF THE CITY

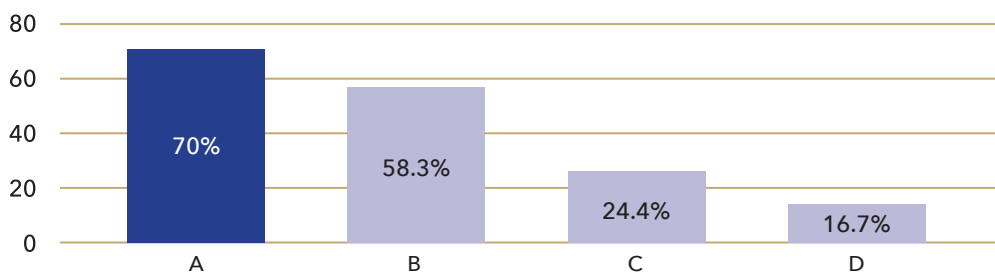


Figure 3: Magnitude of Decrease in Shootings 2010-2011

Figure 3 compares the percentage decrease in shootings from four perspectives:

- **Column A** in this figure illustrates the percentage drop in shootings between SSCP’s primary focus – the groups in conflict: **a 70 percent drop.**
- **Column B** illustrates the drop in shootings in the Mack Road corridor, the neighborhoods where the partners focused the clergy walks and street outreach efforts: **a 58.3 percent drop.**
- **Column C** illustrates the drop in shootings in District 5 which includes the Mack Road area but is much larger and stretches across most of south Sacramento: **a 24.4 percent drop.**
- **Column D** illustrates the drop in shootings citywide: **a 16.7 percent drop.**

Summary: The decrease in shootings between the groups and in the areas focused on by SSCP outpaced the overall decrease in south Sacramento and the city as a whole. Furthermore, the extent of the decrease, its timing, and its geographic focus suggest that the partners’ efforts coincided with a significant and sustained decrease in violence among the groups in conflict and in the Mack Road corridor.

PARTICIPANT RECIDIVISM

Only five of the first 75 participants (those that participated in call-ins more than a year ago) have been rearrested for violent felonies. We are encouraged but note that it’s very early to draw conclusions regarding the effect of the intervention on recidivism.

CONCLUSION: A WORTHY INVESTMENT IN A MAJOR PROBLEM

The in-depth analysis CPSC conducted of violence in south Sacramento suggests that gang-related violence accounts for approximately 52 percent of shootings there. Our analysis of other violent incidents (drug-related violence and domestic violence, for example) suggest that individuals involved in gangs, crews and sets are responsible for another 25 percent of the area’s violence. Though there is much more to learn and do, progress thus far represents a worthy investment in addressing one of the most challenging problems facing Sacramento.

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