

# CASE STUDY

## ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI



*Leveraging a comprehensive coalition of agencies to reduce violent crime victimization*

In March 2016, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) invited St. Louis, Missouri, to be part of the National Public Safety Partnership (PSP). The PSP is a DOJ-wide program that helps participating cities address serious violent crime challenges over a three-year engagement by facilitating the development of data-driven, evidence-based strategies tailored to each city's unique local needs.



### ABOUT ST. LOUIS

St. Louis, home to the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD), is an independent city not in the territory of any county. It is one of only three independent US cities outside the Commonwealth of Virginia (Baltimore, Maryland, and Carson City, Nevada, are the other two). The City of St. Louis borders the State of Illinois separated by the Mississippi River, and because of its location on the river, it is the third busiest inland port. The city is the second largest in Missouri after Kansas City and the 60th largest in the US with a resident population of about 316,000 and a workday population nearing 1 million. The city encompasses approximately 66 square miles. The city is effectively bordered by the Mississippi, Missouri, and Meramec Rivers; the River des Peres; and the adjacent St. Louis County. Due to the large Mississippi River bordering the east of the city, water accounts for about four square miles of the city's area. The city is also responsible for the Lambert-St. Louis International Airport, an enclave owned by the city in St. Louis County.

Additionally, the Greater St. Louis metropolitan area includes the City of St. Louis and parts of Missouri and Illinois, making it the largest metropolitan area in Missouri and the 19th largest in the US, expanding the population to an estimated 3 million. SLMPD is responsible for law enforcement within the city, airport, and city limit portion of the Mississippi River. SLMPD has about 1,300 officers and a large number of civilians. It also has about 300 shared patrol vehicles, all equipped with mobile data terminals (MDTs) that run automated vehicle locators (AVL). The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA) certifies SLMPD. The agency is divided into six districts.

#### Incidents of Crime in St. Louis, MO, 2013-2019

	Category	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 YTD
<b>Violent Crime</b>	Aggravated assaults	3,167	3,348	3,522	3,638	4,021	3,577	2,671
	Forcible rapes	333	279	263	288	289	309	160
	Homicides	120	159	188	188	205	187	136
	Robberies	1,458	1,562	1,790	1,904	1,944	1,452	948
	Car jackings						350	225
<b>Property Crime</b>	Burglaries	4,305	4,209	4,203	3,201	3,138	2,979	1,980
	Larceny-thefts	13,452	12,465	12,680	12,394	12,894	12,414	7,903
	Motor vehicle thefts	3,330	3,247	3,146	3,058	2,713	2,750	1,919

\*2019 Represents reported crime through September 1, 2019.

The City of St. Louis has experienced an extremely high violent crime rate during the past five years. In fact, the city was ranked first on the Most Dangerous City list released in 2016 and 2018 (USA Today, 2018) based on Part I (Violent Crime) Uniform Crime Data reported by the FBI. St. Louis briefly dropped to second in 2017. In 2016, St. Louis experienced 1,913 violent crimes per

100,000 residents, the highest rate of any city in the nation. Also in 2016, it experienced 60 homicides per 100,000 residents, more than 10 times the national homicide rate. The primary factor contributing to the high incidence of violent crime is gun related offenses. Among larger cities, St. Louis has the highest murder rate nationwide, and its rate has risen in recent years even as gun violence in other large, high crime cities leveled off. Although the violent crime in many cities has continued to decline, St. Louis has experienced recent increases. According to SLMPD, the crime patterns are the most prominent along the Washington Avenue corridor.

## PSP PARTICIPATION

Upon joining the PSP initiative, St. Louis identified three primary focus areas for the engagement: enhancing violent crime investigations, improving the capacity of National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) generated intelligence, and building collaborations to address domestic violence and witness intimidation. As a direct result of participating in the PSP, St. Louis has made significant progress in the city's capacity to address and prevent violence. PSP has focused on helping the city establish strategic and effective partnerships to comprehensively respond to violent crime.

The most successful PSP initiatives in St. Louis were the development of a Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC), the creation of a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, and the formation of Non-Fatal Shooting Investigation Teams in the SLMPD. In addition to developing the CGIC, St. Louis further enhanced investigations by establishing a multi-jurisdictional task force to address the escalating car-jacking problem within the city. Through this task force, federal law enforcement teams provide support by strategically targeting violent offenders. In response to these partnerships, in 2018 the US Attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri doubled the size of the Violent Crime Unit to support the increase of federal prosecutions. This US Attorney's Office currently leads the nation in the adoption and prosecution of violent gun offenders.

## Local and Federal Partners

The following agencies were instrumental in carrying out PSP initiatives:

- St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department
- St. Louis Circuit Attorney's Office
- St. Louis Office of the Mayor
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- US Marshals Service (USMS)
- US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Missouri

## EXAMPLES OF TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE ST. LOUIS PSP SITE

**Office of Violence Against Women and Dr. Neil Websdale Capacity Evaluation** (May 2016)

**Peer Exchange to the DEA El Paso Intelligence Center** (June 2016)

**Peer Exchange to Denver's Crime Gun Intelligence Center** (July 2016)

**Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, Training and Targeted Technical Assistance** (2016-2018)

**Peer Exchange to Milwaukee to observe CompStat** (January 2017)

**Non-Fatal Shootings and Gun Violence Technical Assistance** (January 2017)

**Federal Marshal's Roundtable on Witness Intimidation in New York** (May 2017)

**Witness Intimidation Technical Assistance** (May 2018)

**FBI Basic and Advanced Homicide Investigation Trainings** (2018)

**Trauma Informed Policing Initiative Technical Assistance** (2019)

**ATF National Integrated Ballistic Information Network Support** (Ongoing)



## CRIME GUN INTELLIGENCE CENTER

At the inception of the PSP initiative, St. Louis was experiencing an extensive backlog in the processing of ballistic evidence. Detectives were waiting several months for the results of NIBIN comparisons, and a high volume of ballistic evidence remained unprocessed. In 2016, PSP introduced St. Louis to the framework of a Crime Gun Intelligence Center. St. Louis participated in a peer visit to Denver where they learned best practices related to NIBIN correlations. This peer visit resulted in the ATF, SLMPD, US Attorney's Office, and Circuit Attorney's Office establishing a working group for developing a CGIC. This working group was awarded federal support under the Police Prosecutor Partnership Initiative, and in 2018, the city formally established a local CGIC. This CGIC has eliminated the ballistic backlog in St. Louis, and correlation analysis is now completed within 48 hours of the recovery of all casings and firearms. To supplement this initiative, ATF established a Strikeforce in St. Louis in 2019 that provided additional federal agents to support NIBIN-generated investigations.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW BOARD

At the start of the PSP initiative, St. Louis was experiencing an increasing trend in domestic violence fatalities. The city wanted to leverage the expertise within PSP to develop a comprehensive coalition of agencies and nonprofit partners to address this problem. In 2016, the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) and subject matter expert Dr. Neil Websdale evaluated the city's capacity to develop a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board. The evaluation revealed that a legislative change in the State of Missouri was necessary to create such a review board. During the 2017 and 2018 state legislative sessions, St. Louis worked with PSP and OVW to draft a state law that gave the St. Louis Circuit Attorney the authority to convene a multi-agency review board to examine systemic issues in domestic violence homicides. This legislation was signed into law in January of 2019, and St. Louis' Domestic Violence Review Board was established in April of 2019.

### **455.560. Domestic violence fatality review panels, members – report.**

1. A prosecuting attorney or circuit attorney may impanel a domestic violence fatality review panel for the county or city not within a county in which he or she serves to investigate the deaths of victims of homicides determined to be related to domestic violence, as the term is defined in section [455.010](#).
2. Members of the panel may include any representative of programs or organizations that provide services and responses to victims of domestic violence within the county or city not within a county. The panel shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following members:
  - (1) The prosecuting or circuit attorney;
  - (2) The coroner or medical examiner for the county or city not within a county;
  - (3) A representative of law enforcement personnel in the county or city not within a county;
  - (4) A provider of public health care services;
  - (5) A provider of emergency medical services or other medical or health care providers;
  - (6) A representative of any victim assistant unit for the prosecuting or circuit attorney, law enforcement organization, or court of the county or city not within a county;
  - (7) A representative of shelters for victims of domestic violence, as defined in section [455.200](#), or domestic violence services organizations that provide services for victims within the county or city not within a county; and
  - (8) A representative of rape crisis centers, as defined in section [455.003](#), that provide sexual assault services for victims within the county or city not within a county.
3. A prosecuting or circuit attorney shall organize the panel and shall call the first organizational meeting of the panel. The panel shall elect a chairperson who shall convene the panel to meet to review all deaths of victims of homicides determined to be related to domestic violence.
4. The executive officer of any municipality or county may request that a domestic violence fatality review panel be convened in response to any fatality which occurs within the boundaries of the municipality or county.
5. Work products of the domestic violence fatality review panel other than the final report required by subsection 6 of this section, including but not limited to internal memoranda, summaries or minutes of panel meetings, and written, audio recorded, or electronic records and communications, are not public records as defined by subdivision (6) of section [610.010](#) and are not available for public examination, reproduction, or disclosure, and are not admissible as evidence in any civil, criminal, or administrative proceeding.
6. The panel shall issue a final report, which shall be a public record as defined by subdivision (6) of section [610.010](#), of each investigation. The final report shall include the panel's findings and recommendations for enhanced practices, protocols, and collaborations to address domestic violence and prevent homicides, and a copy shall be provided to the governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, the president pro tempore of the senate, the executive leadership of the government of the political subdivision of the state of Missouri in which the panel operates, and the statewide domestic violence coalition, as such is recognized by the United States Department of Justice and the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The final report shall also include a summary.

## NON-FATAL SHOOTING INVESTIGATION TEAMS

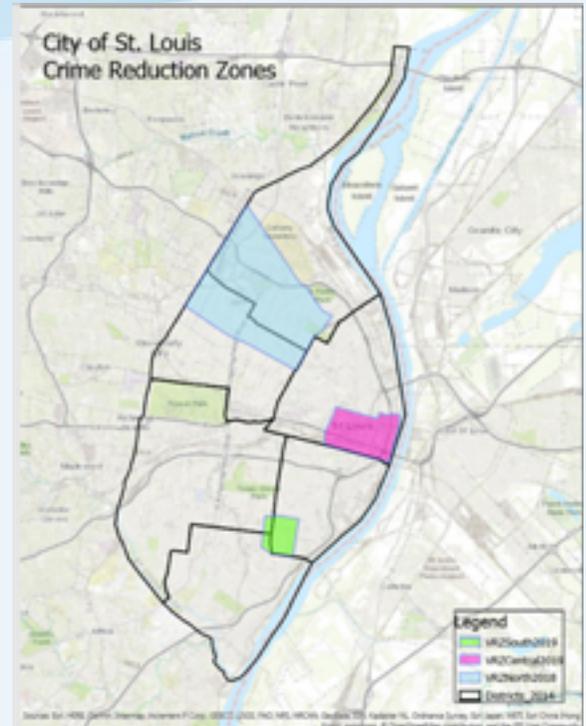
In 2016, the SLMPD was struggling to effectively respond to non-fatal shootings. The department lacked an internal policy and system to prioritize and track investigations of non-fatal shootings. As a result, the non-fatal shooting clearance rate was estimated at less than 15 percent. In 2017, PSP subject matter experts provide SLMPD with technical assistance to improve investigative process of non-fatal shootings. As a result, the SLMPD established Non-Fatal Shooting Investigation Teams within the patrol areas of the city. These investigative teams fall under the direct command of the Patrol Area Commanders and all shooting investigations are now tracked and analyzed. These combined efforts have increased the clearance rate for non-fatal shootings to approximately 40 percent.

## VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION EFFORTS

In 2017, the city experienced an increase of violence, followed by a steady decrease in violent crime in 2018. The decrease of violent crime corresponded directly with the creation of an Impact Zone in the north end of the city. During 2018, this Impact Zone received concentrated enforcement from both SLMPD and federal law enforcement teams. As a result of the reduction in violent crime achieved in the northern Impact Zone, the SLMPD created two additional Impact Zones in 2019 to address violent crime hot spots in the central and south areas of the city.

Notable 2018 crime reduction trends included:

- A reduction of homicides by 8.7 percent
- A decrease in aggravated assaults by 11 percent
- A 25 percent reduction in robberies—a five-year low in the number of robberies occurring in St. Louis
- A 20 percent decrease in violent crime within the primary Impact Zone
- A 14.5 percent decrease in total violent crime



## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT OF INITIATIVES

During the three-year PSP engagement, St. Louis also participated in several DOJ-led programs, including a Diagnostic, a Police Prosecutor Partnership project, the Strategies for Policing Innovation initiative, and a Project Safe Neighborhoods collaboration. The coordinators of these projects along with stakeholders in St. Louis worked collectively to strategically align these initiatives with core PSP violence reduction strategies.

## CONCLUSION

St. Louis made considerable progress in reducing violent crime in the city. The PSP helped St. Louis become more effective in comprehensively confronting violent crime. The city is now leveraging resources and sharing information at levels not previously possible. St. Louis' leadership expressed that the greatest asset of the PSP initiative is the access to a professional community of support. They found the knowledgeable subject matter experts, peer visits, annual PSP Symposiums, and inter-city exchanges invaluable for sharing ideas and learning best practices. St. Louis used these interactions to develop new ideas and enhance existing programs to progressively address challenges confronting the city. Although many challenges remain, PSP has helped establish a strong foundation for future growth. This foundation has allowed St. Louis to become stronger, more resourceful, and more effective in confronting violent crime in the city.