



Case Study

North Charleston, South Carolina: Growing Safer Day by Day

**“ShotSpotter,
combined with
proactive
patrol work,
reduced
violent crime
by 35% in
2004.”**

*- Sgt. Karen Cordray,
North Charleston Police
Dept., Crime Analysis Unit*

North Charleston, the third-largest municipality in South Carolina, has seen its safety rating rise dramatically over the past three years. The ShotSpotter Metro Gunshot Location System (GLS) is helping public safety officials reduce violent crime by 35% in some of the more dangerous neighborhoods.

Problem Overview

North Charleston, SC is a vibrant city that attracts more than two million visitors annually. Its coliseum, convention center, performing arts center and beautiful neighborhoods bring an atmosphere of prosperity, excitement and continued growth. Unfortunately, perhaps due to rapid growth, a small number of neighborhoods have shown a different characteristic: high violent crime rates. In the past few years, narcotics use became prevalent in these neighborhoods, with an accompanying increase in home invasions. This created an atmosphere of fear in certain areas of the city.

The City experienced violent crime rates of 10% in 2001, rising rapidly to 17% in 2002, with almost 900 aggravated assaults (most of them via firearms). In spite of vigorous work on the part of public safety, the rates continued to climb. In 2003, North Charleston was named the 12th most dangerous city in America. Determined to change that unenviable distinction, city officials looked for ways to improve public safety and restore the image of the city.

About ShotSpotter

ShotSpotter, Inc., the world leader in gunshot location and detection systems for the public safety and military markets, is based in Santa Clara, CA. ShotSpotter's patented, award-winning solutions are proven to reduce violent crime and gunfire, and thus homicide rates. For more information on ShotSpotter visit www.shotspotter.com, call us at (888) 274-6877 or (408) 329-9200, or email us at info@shotspotter.com.



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ShotSpotter's sensors "...specifically identify gunfire by screening out other similar sounds... and triangulates to provide a specific geographical location within 20 to 40 feet."

- Justice Technology Information Center, National Institute of Justice



Police in North Charleston work diligently to make their city safer day by day.

Working with the US Attorney's Office

North Charleston officials began to work with the US Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of South Carolina in 2002 to find a gunshot location solution. The need was apparent, but few products had the proven track record that North Charleston sought. Only one product – the ShotSpotter Gunshot Location System (GLS) – had been working successfully in the field for a number of years. Both the US Attorney and officials in the police department had seen a demonstration of the ShotSpotter GLS and called the company for a demonstration during the summer of 2002.

The USAO selected ShotSpotter as the gunshot location system that best fit the requirements of the project. Their website (www.nlectc.org) states: "This technology consists of acoustical devices, which specifically identify gunfire by screening out other similar sounds (such as automobile backfires and firecrackers) and triangulates to provide a specific geographical location within 20 to 40 feet. The information is displayed on a computerized map, so that reaction teams in targeted areas can immediately respond to the location."

Sgt. Karen Cordray of the North Charleston Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit explains that the city decided to go ahead with a trial of the system, using funding from the Safe Cities project under the auspices of the USAO. The trial was undertaken as part of the Safe Neighborhoods Project, a nationwide program that targets gun crime and provides local communities with funding and tools for hiring and training; supporting investigations, and community outreach programs. The project represents a combination of the above initiatives.

Testing the System

Planning sessions were held throughout the autumn, and the sensors were installed in various parts of the city. ShotSpotter was first tested in two of the worst areas in the city, one on the south end and the other on the north end. To begin the testing, ShotSpotter personnel were on hand to train local dispatchers in the use of the system, especially the Public Safety Console. Training was relatively straightforward, yet special attention was paid to ensuring that dispatchers and public safety officials learned how to listen to the acoustic files and distinguish between a gunshot and other similar noises such as vehicle backfires and firecrackers. Another useful tool is the measuring tool, which provides personnel with a much more focused area of interest.

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Even during the testing phase, the ShotSpotter GLS proved its worth. In the middle of the test, dispatchers received a call from a resident inquiring as to whether the police were conducting test shootings in the neighborhood. The ShotSpotter sensors had simultaneously detected gunfire, and public safety personnel were dispatched. They were able to catch a shooter who had stolen a gun from a mall 30 minutes previously. In fact, two people were caught red-handed, as a result of the ShotSpotter GLS.

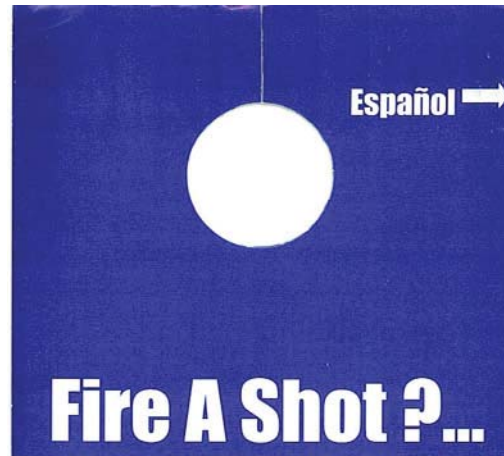
Involving the Community in the Implementation

One of the key ingredients in the North Charleston approach to reducing gun-related crime is community involvement. The police department designed and made up hundreds of door-hangers (see example) to let the citizens know that illegal gunfire is taken very seriously. The door-hangers served as a visual reminder to the citizenry that the North Charleston police were being vigilant, using high-tech tools to locate gunfire, and protecting the safety of the citizens.

Each door-hanger, printed in both English and Spanish, included basic information on how ShotSpotter was assisting public safety officials. The door-hangers also included an email address and/or emergency phone number where a citizen could report a gunshot, as well as a reminder to note the date and time of the incident. Although many people were not eager to be seen talking to the police, they were nevertheless encouraged to be an active participant in making their own streets safe, by reporting gunfire from the privacy and anonymity of their homes.

Citizens Applaud Results

The system has obviously yielded results, judging by the fact that North Charleston has dropped from the 12th most dangerous city in the US to the 20th, thanks to a combined effort on the part of public safety, ShotSpotter and the citizens. According to Sgt. Cordray, the community has been thrilled with the system. It helps identify areas with a lot of gun activity, so that police can then attack these areas through increased canine presence, more patrols, etc. ShotSpotter can overlay a troublesome area and narrow it down to a particular neighborhood or part of a neighborhood. We can saturate these areas, especially where there are a lot of aggravated assaults and violent crimes," she explains.



Fire A Shot ?...

**You're Gonna
Get CAUGHT!**



Shot Spotter pinpoints the exact address, where a gunshot has been fired 24-hours a day, 7-days a week.

Officer _____ @ _____
Or Call 911
Date/Time of Incident _____

Doorhangers, in English and Spanish, alert the citizenry to the fact that public safety officials are being assisted by the ShotSpotter Gunshot Location System, or GLS.

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“In my opinion, [ShotSpotter] has made a big difference. I think the word got out and guys are scared to fire guns over here.”

*- Larenda Baxley, President,
Ferndale Neighborhood
Association, North Charleston*

Police Welcome Investigative Help

ShotSpotter will never replace a police officer, but it provides valuable evidence both during investigations and ensuing legal matters. Many arrests are made after the fact through detective investigation, where ShotSpotter helps facilitate evidence-gathering. In addition, according to Sgt. Cordray, “ShotSpotter picks up incidents that people just don’t phone in. I think it’s your eyes and ears on the street – a good thing to have! In one area of the City a combination of ShotSpotter and proactive patrol work reduced violent crime by 35%.”

Reports show that in the first year, police made 18 arrests as a result of ShotSpotter, six during the initial response and 12 after follow-up investigations. Even when no calls come in, police are able to determine that shots have been fired. They can break out the incident shot by shot, and find the direction in which the shooter is moving, according to Cordray. As they uncover evidence at the scene, it is run through IBIS (Integrated Ballistic Identification System) which helps them determine if the incident can be linked to another crime, such as a homicide. “This case linkage is very valuable,” reports Cordray.

Final Words

Larenda Baxley, president of the Ferndale neighborhood association in North Charleston, said she used to hear gunfire three or four nights a week but such incidents do not happen as often now. “In my opinion, [ShotSpotter] has made a big difference,” she said. “I think the word got out and guys are scared to fire guns over here.”

THE SHOTSPOTTER DIFFERENCE

Proven, Patented Technology

The only gunshot detection system to be successfully deployed for ten years, with more than a dozen installations across the United States.

Seasoned Management.

Senior management- PhDs, retired military officers and former sworn law enforcement officers provide in-depth subject matter expertise.

Industry Best Practices

Providing expert advice to cities and counties as to gunshot detection, deployment and operational enforcement methodology.