

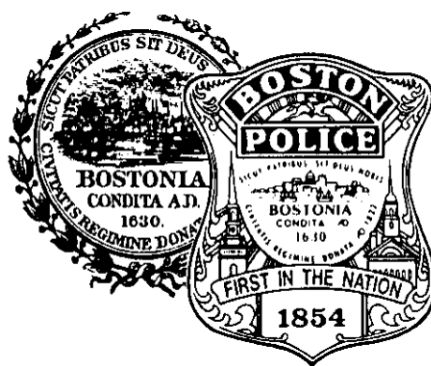
Boston Police Department

Safe Street Teams Problem-Oriented Policing Initiative



2012 Goldstein Award Submission

Center for Problem-Oriented Policing



Mayor Thomas M. Menino

Commissioner Edward F. Davis

The Boston Police Department's Safe Street Team Initiative

When Edward F. Davis was appointed Commissioner of the Boston Police Department (BPD) in December 2006, Boston was experiencing decade-high increases in violence. In order to address the increases in violence and to reduce the level of fear in the city, he responded by making a commitment to return the BPD to a problem-oriented policing focus and to bolster collaborative violence prevention. Borne from these objectives was the Safe Street Team (SST) problem-oriented policing initiative. Using crime mapping and spatial analysis, several persistent, small, geographic hot spots experiencing high levels of violence were identified. These areas were plagued by high incidence of public disorder, and in many cases gang-related violence, that harmed quality of life for residents in the area. Launched in January 2007, the SSTs cover 13 distinct hot spots in 7 of the BPD's 11 districts.

During specialized SST training, the SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) model is emphasized as a methodology to respond to issues in the SST hot spot locations. The problem-oriented policing approach is critical in allowing the teams the flexibility to address the unique set of challenges and opportunities they face in their diverse violent crime hot spot areas. As part of their problem-solving efforts, the SST officers interact with community members, respond to community concerns, and are highly visible in targeted violent crime hot spot locations. The SSTs consist of one sergeant and six patrol officers who are encouraged to use alternative approaches to address crime problems. As such, they develop partnerships with local businesses and community organizations, conduct outreach with high-risk youth, and provide referrals to services. SSTs enable officers to develop a sense of ownership, engage in strategic problem-oriented policing, and sustain presence and a sense of guardianship in their areas. In addition to their traditional enforcement roles, officers also play the roles of mentor,

coach, customer service representative, and conflict mediator. Above all else, SST officers are required to be problem solvers.

On a citywide and neighborhood level, SSTs have gained valuable partners to aid them in implementing their responses to recurring violent crime problems in their designated areas. The SSTs have been successful in collaborating with other units internal to the BPD, as well as City of Boston departments such as public works, parks and recreation, and the schools. SSTs receive priority when they request work orders, lending credibility to the officers among community members. Due to the diverse nature of the violent crime hot spots covered by the SSTs, the officers collaborate with a wide range of non-profit organizations and businesses. Some of the SSTs are in more commercially-based areas, while others focus on work with large tenant organizations. In more residential areas, SST officers have collaborated with community centers, health centers, landlords, schools, and youth organizations.

As will be detailed below, the SST program generated a 17% reduction in violent crime in the treated hot spot areas relative to comparison hot spot areas. Importantly, the SSTs did not generate these prevention gains by simply displacing crime into areas immediately surrounding the targeted hot spots. Beyond the demonstrated crime control gains, the SST represents an ambitious attempt to institutionalize problem-oriented policing as a keystone departmental strategy to address violence crime. While the evaluation results were only recently available, the SST has been running strong for more than five years now. Indeed, the success of the program has led to community calls for additional SSTs to be deployed to other violent crime hot spots. The BPD recently applied to the U.S. Office of Community Oriented Policing Services to fund additional officers to staff an expansion of the initiative.

The SST program is also noteworthy as it represents an unusual collaboration with academic researchers to conduct rigorous problem analysis and program evaluation of the initiative. This application describes a long term commitment to strong problem analysis and response assessment. With the support of a Smart Policing Initiative grant from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the BPD partnered with a team of academics from Harvard University and Rutgers University, led by Professor Anthony A. Braga, to implement and evaluate the SST program.¹ The BPD believes that this experience demonstrates the strong benefits of such practitioner-research partnerships in the development and evaluation of problem-oriented policing initiatives.

Scanning

After experiencing dramatic decreases in violent crime over the course of the 1990s, the City of Boston experienced a resurgence of serious violence during the early to mid 2000s, peaking at 7,533 violent index crimes in 2006 (Figure 1). Most concerning was an increase in assaultive street violence, especially assaults committed with guns. The yearly number of fatal and non-fatal shootings increased 133 percent from 162 in 2000 to 377 in 2006. Like most cities, the increasing violent crime problem was not evenly spread throughout Boston. Violent crimes were concentrated in very small “hot spot” areas. For instance, most of the shootings were concentrated in a small number of gun violence hot spots in Boston’s disadvantaged, predominately minority neighborhoods of Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury. These gun

¹ This collaboration has led to a recent series of articles derived from the problem analysis and program evaluation work described here. Please see Braga, Anthony A. and Edward F. Davis. 2012. “Evidence-Based Policing in Practice: The Case of Safe Street Teams in Boston.” *Translational Criminology*, Winter: 8 – 9; Braga, Anthony A., David M. Hureau, and Andrew V. Papachristos. 2011. “An Ex-Post-Facto Evaluation Framework for Place-Based Police Interventions.” *Evaluation Review*, 35 (6): 592 – 626; Braga, Anthony A., David M. Hureau, and Andrew V. Papachristos. 2011. “The Relevance of Micro Places to Citywide Robbery Trends: A Longitudinal Analysis of Robbery Incidents at Street Corners and Block Faces in Boston.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 48 (1): 7 – 32; Braga, Anthony A., Andrew V. Papachristos, and David M. Hureau. 2010. “The Concentration and Stability of Gun Violence at Micro Places in Boston, 1980 – 2008.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 26 (1): 33 – 53. This submission draws on these materials.

violence hot spots covered only 5.1 percent of Boston's 48.4 square miles, but generated nearly 53 percent (199) of the 377 fatal and non-fatal shootings in 2006 (Figure 2).

During this time period, Boston residents became more concerned about crime and less confident in the ability of the BPD to prevent crime. In 1997, 14.2 percent of Boston residents reported crime as their biggest concern. Crime as the biggest concern of Boston residents dropped to only 7.2 percent in 1999, remained low in 2001 and 2003, and then increased to 15.5 percent in 2006. In 1997, only 16.2 percent of Boston residents had little or no faith in the BPD to prevent crime; by 2006, this lack of faith in the police had risen to include nearly one quarter of Boston residents. In minority neighborhoods suffering from an increased number of spatial concentrations of violent crime, resident concerns about crime were much higher and faith in the BPD to prevent crime was much lower than residents in other parts of the city.

The challenge to the BPD was clear. A citywide increase in violent crime seemed to be driven by a very small number of violent crime hot spot locations in Boston. The rise in violent crime increased citizen fear and eroded public confidence in the BPD. The initial scan of violence suggested to Commissioner Davis and the BPD command staff that violent crime hot spots represented persistent public safety problems to Boston residents. The BPD decided that an appropriate problem-oriented response would require assigning teams of officers on a permanent basis to analyze the underlying problems of these violent places and to develop tailored strategies to address the conditions that caused these locations to remain hot over time.

Analysis

The analysis for the SST problem-oriented policing project occurred at two levels: a formal citywide analysis of persistent violent crime hot spots by BPD analysts and an academic research team, and place-level analyses by officers assigned to hot spot locations. The citywide

analysis was designed to identify the specific locations for sustained problem-oriented policing intervention. In collaboration with a research team from Harvard University and Rutgers University, the BPD analyzed the concentration and stability of violent crime in specific hot spot locations over time in Boston. The purpose of this exercise was to ensure that the Safe Street Teams were appropriately assigned to those locations that consistently generated repeated violent crime incidents over a longer time period. The BPD did not want to make investments of scarce police officer resources at locations that represented short-term or temporary problems.

The analysis began with the creation of a spatial database that captured each intersection and street segment (the street sections in between two intersections) across the city. The research team identified 18,155 street segments and 10,375 intersections in the City of Boston. The team then gathered data from BPD on all reported robberies (street and commercial; 142,213 robberies) and all injurious shooting events (shots were fired and a person was wounded; 7,602) from 1980-2008.² These crimes were geocoded and assigned to their appropriate “street unit” (segment or intersection). The research team then used sophisticated growth curve regression models³ to examine the stability of trends in robbery and serious gun violence over the 29-year study period.

The analysis uncovered remarkable stability in crime trends at these street units. With regard to robbery, from 1980-2008 about *one percent of street segments and eight percent of intersections were responsible for nearly 50 percent of all commercial robberies and 66 percent*

² This represents the time period on the final analysis found in published reports referenced earlier (e.g. Braga et al. 2010). During the formative stages of the Safe Street Team initiative, the time period was 1980 – 2006. While shootings and robberies are highlighted here, the analyses included total violent crime, aggravated assaults, and rape / sexual assaults. The distribution of violent crimes that generated higher levels of fear, shootings and robberies, weighed more heavily in the minds of BPD command staff in making decisions on the actual locations of Safe Street Team hot spot areas.

³ Growth curve regression models are multi-level models that facilitate the analysis of trends at individual units over time. In these exercises, the research team was interested in analyzing violent crime trends at each street unit in Boston over the study time period.

of all street robberies. Figure 3 demonstrates this stability in robbery trends in a slightly different way. The steady lower line demonstrates that about two percent of the street units experienced 50 percent of the robberies during each of the 29 years under examination. The top line shows the percentage of street units that experienced 100 percent of the robberies during each year of study. For example, in 1980 all of the robberies that year occurred at just under 12 percent of the street units in Boston. Over time, the concentration of robberies increased rather dramatically. By 2008, *all of the robberies during that year occurred at just 6 percent of the street units in Boston.*

The story was much the same with gun violence, as only 5 percent of street units experienced 74 percent of the gun violence from 1980-2008. Table 1 shows the distribution of gun violence across each of the 28,530 street units, and from 1980-2008, 88.5 percent of the street units in the city did not experience a single shooting event. Alternatively, 269 street units experienced from 5-9 shooting events, and 65 street units experienced 10 or more shooting events. Amazingly, *the worst 60 street units in Boston experienced more than 1,000 shootings between 1980 and 2008.*

In short, both robberies and gun violence were highly concentrated at a small number of street corners and intersections in Boston, and this concentration remained remarkably stable over time. Figures 4 (robbery) and 5 (shootings) reveal the spatial distribution of these persistently hot violent street units in Boston. These analyses were combined with qualitative assessments of natural place boundaries by the BPD command staff to define 13 SST areas in January 2007 (the program launch date; see Response section). The BPD did not have the resources to cover every violent place in Boston.⁴ Nevertheless, these 13 hot spot areas

⁴ As will be discussed in the Assessment section, the inability of the BPD to field enough resources to cover all violent crime hot spots in Boston provided an important opportunity to conduct a rigorous controlled evaluation of the Safe Street Team initiative.

represented only 6.1 percent of Boston's street geography, but these locations were responsible for 23.1 percent of Boston's violent crime incidents in 2006 (1,743 of 7,533).

The second-level of analysis occurred in each of the 13 SST areas. While the research team did not participate in formal analyses of violent crime problems at each place, the Safe Street Team officers were trained by Professor Anthony Braga in problem analysis and response development. Each team was required to speak with local residents and business owners, analyze crime incident and calls for service data (identifying recurring problem people, crime modus operandi, and problematic addresses in the areas as well as "hot" times and days of the week), and use their own qualitative assessments to identify and analyze specific problems in their designated violent crime hot spot. Team sergeants were required to document the problems and the data sources used to identify the problems in reports to the Deputy Superintendent overseeing the program.

The identified problems and their underlying causes were highly varied across the 13 targeted hot spot locations. For instance, the Downtown Crossing and Tremont / Stuart SST officers faced street violence problems tied to three very different disorder-based problems. First, both of these teams bordered the Boston Common area which suffers from a large and transient homeless population. While many homeless individuals did not cause violence in the area, a small number of mentally-disordered and criminally-active individuals engaged in street fights to settle disputes and committed robberies of other homeless people, shoppers, and workers in the area. Second, large groups of high school students congregate around Boston Common during the afternoons after school release. Most of the students didn't cause problems; however, gang members blended into this crowd, sold drugs to homeless individuals and others, and sometimes fired guns when in dispute with rival gang members. Third, during the late night

hours, the many clubs and pubs in the Common area attracted young adults who tended to drink too much alcohol and get into fights inside the bars and out on the streets.

Other SST areas, such as Codman Square (C-11), faced street robbery problems generated by local hoodlums preying on commuters, gang violence between rival factions of local youth, disorderly bars over-serving clients, and drug market violence. The number of problems identified and analyzed ranged from 3 to 7, with an average of 4.5 violent crime problems tackled per SST hot spot area. The quality of the problem analysis varied across the teams. Some sergeants and officers were quite adept at using available BPD computer mapping and software programs to analyze data in their hot spot areas and produced more sophisticated analyses. Several officers received support from crime analysts in the BPD's Boston Regional Intelligence Center to unravel the nature of violence in their places. Other officers tended to rely more on their informal assessments based on experiences in the area and produced less nuanced analytical products. Nevertheless, the process of identifying discrete problems that cause violent crime to concentrate at specific places and unraveling the underlying conditions that gave rise to those problems was a highly productive exercise across all SST areas. The place-level analyses of problems advanced a set of problem-oriented responses that were far more nuanced when compared to standard policing actions taken by BPD officers in other parts of the city.

Response

The SST program assigned teams of BPD officers responsible for using problem-oriented policing techniques to address recurring problems in the targeted 13 violent crime hot spots. Unless there was an emergency that required additional support outside their defined areas, SST officers are required to stay in their assigned hot spot. SST officers are required to be on foot or riding a bike in the hot spots. Commissioner Davis also required officers to engage community

members and local merchants in defining and responding to identified problems in the hot spot areas. A Deputy Superintendent was assigned to oversee the initiative and, in each violent crime hot spot, a sergeant and six patrol officers were assigned to implement the program. All SST officers were required to go through additional in-service training on the requirements of the program and on the principles and techniques of community and problem-oriented policing. To ensure that the program was being implemented as intended, the BPD had quarterly accountability meetings with the SST teams. Two of these meetings were held in BPD headquarters and the other two meetings were held in the policing district stations that covered the SST areas. In these meetings, violent crime trends and patterns in each SST area were reviewed and crime problems and appropriate responses were discussed.

In partnership with the BPD's Office of Research and Development, the research team documented the problem-oriented policing interventions implemented by the SST officers in their 13 hot spots between 2007 and 2009. These data were collected via reviewing the weekly reports submitted by SST sergeants to the deputy superintendent overseeing the program and by interviewing the SST sergeants on their problem-solving actions in their places over time. Table 2 summarizes the 396 distinct problem-oriented policing strategies implemented by the SST officers. These actions fell into three broad areas: *situational / environmental interventions* to change the underlying characteristics and dynamics of the places that the officers believed were linked to violence, *enforcement interventions* to arrest and to deter individuals the officers identified as committing violent crimes or contributing to a disorderly atmosphere at the places, and *community outreach / social service interventions* to stimulate community involvement in crime prevention and to address problematic behaviors by disorderly individuals at the places,

such as local youth with no recreational opportunities or homeless individuals suffering from mental health issues.

Table 3 presents a summary of the types of problem-oriented policing interventions implemented across the 13 SST hot spots. The 13 teams implemented, on average, 30.5 problem-oriented policing interventions per place comprised of 15 situational / environmental interventions, 6.1 enforcement interventions, and 9.4 community outreach / social service interventions. The number of interventions implemented at the places varied based on the nature of problems at the places and each SST sergeant's commitment to using the problem-oriented approach to deal with those problems in a high-fidelity manner.

For instance, in the Orchard Park SST area, high school youth using public transportation were repeatedly robbed and often assaulted by other local youth when commuting between the train station and their high school. The offenders usually robbed the students of their Apple iPods, Apple iPhones, and other technology when they walked in secluded areas and were not paying attention to their surroundings. In addition to increasing their presence and making robbery arrests in the area, SST officers made the place less attractive to youth robbers by collaborating with public works to fence a vacant lot and trim overgrown bushes and other vegetation that helped conceal robbers from their victims. The officers then collaborated with the local high school to raise awareness among the students that they should be aware of their surroundings and refrain from using smart phones and other items that were attractive to robbers when commuting in the risky area. The officers also sponsored a contest for students to design robbery awareness fliers and posters that used slogans and lingo that would appeal to youth. The fliers were distributed to all high school students and posters were displayed on school grounds,

in the train station, and in the windows of stores on the route between the train station and the school.

Assessment

Over the course of the three years after SST was implemented, violent index crimes in Boston steadily decreased (Figure 1). By 2009, violent index crimes in Boston had decreased by nearly 18% to a decade low of 6,192 incidents from the decade high of 7,533 incidents in 2007. Unfortunately, in the absence of a controlled evaluation design to accompany program development and implementation, it was unclear whether the SST strategy could claim any credit for the observed decreases. For instance, the observed Boston violent crime decreases could have been part of a larger national trend; U.S. violent index crimes decreased by 7.5% between 2000 and 2009. A simple pre-post analysis of citywide violent crime trend data obviously does not parse out the independent effects of the SST program relative to other rival causal factors.

Given the presence of other untreated violent crime hot spots in Boston, the Harvard and Rutgers research team was able to identify equivalent comparison street intersections and block faces for inclusion in a rigorous quasi-experimental research design. The researchers developed matched comparison violent crime street segments and intersections by using propensity score statistical matching techniques. Propensity score matching techniques attempt to create equivalent treatment and comparison groups by summarizing relevant pre-treatment characteristics of each subject into a single-index variable (the propensity score) and then matching subjects in the untreated comparison pool to subjects in the treatment group based on values of the single-index variable. In the analysis, the pre-treatment characteristics considered in the propensity score matching analysis were 2006 violent Index crime counts, whether the street

unit was a street segment or an intersection, neighborhood disadvantage in the surrounding U.S. Census block, and the number of street units that experienced three or more 2006 violent Index crimes in the surrounding U.S. Census block. To allow for an analysis of immediate spatial displacement and diffusion effects, all street segments and intersections in two-block catchment areas surrounding the SST areas were excluded prior to the execution of the propensity score matching routine.

The propensity score matching routine yielded a set of equivalent treatment street units and comparison street units. A simple time series analysis revealed a sharper downturn in violent Index crimes at the treatment units when compared to the control units (Figure 6). Growth curve regression models, with appropriate covariates to help control for any observable differences between the treatment and control groups, revealed that the SST program was associated with a statistically significant 17% reduction in violent Index crimes in the treatment areas relative to the control areas. Most of this reduction in violent Index crimes was driven by a large 19% reduction in robbery incidents with a smaller 15% reduction in aggravated assault incidents. A subsequent growth curve regression analysis of street units in two-block buffer zones surrounding the treatment and control street units (Figure 7) revealed no evidence of significant crime displacement.

Unfortunately, even with the benefit of modest BJA funds, the BPD did not have adequate funding to conduct surveys of residents in the targeted hot spots before and after the SST implementation. Nevertheless, local media coverage of the SST has been very positive and is suggestive of the positive community reactions to the program. A sampling of this media coverage is included in the Appendix.

Many problem-oriented policing scholars, such as Herman Goldstein, Ronald V. Clarke, Michael Scott and others, lament the generally weak assessments of many problem-oriented policing projects.⁵ As such, the SST program assessment is very unusual given the very rigorous quasi-experimental design used to evaluate the program. The SST impact evaluation measures violent crime before and after the program in multiple treatment and control condition units. This design has better statistical control of extraneous influences on the outcome and, relative to lower-level evaluations, deals with selection and regression threats more adequately. Coupled with the strong process evaluation (results briefly described in previous sections), the BPD believes that the SST experience make a substantial contribution to the existing body of scholarly and practical knowledge on problem-oriented policing.

⁵ Clarke, Ronald V. 1998. "Defining Police Strategies: Problem Solving, Problem-Oriented Policing and Community-Oriented Policing." In T. O'Connor Shelley and A.C. Grant (eds.), *Problem-Oriented Policing: Crime-Specific Problems, Critical Issues, and Making POP Work*. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum; Goldstein, Herman. 2003. "On Further Developing Problem-Oriented Policing: The Most Critical Need, the Major Impediments, and a Proposal." In J. Knutsson (ed.), *Problem-Oriented Policing: From Innovation to Mainstream*. (Crime Prevention Studies, vol. 15). Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press; Scott, Michael. 2000. *Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

Figure 1.

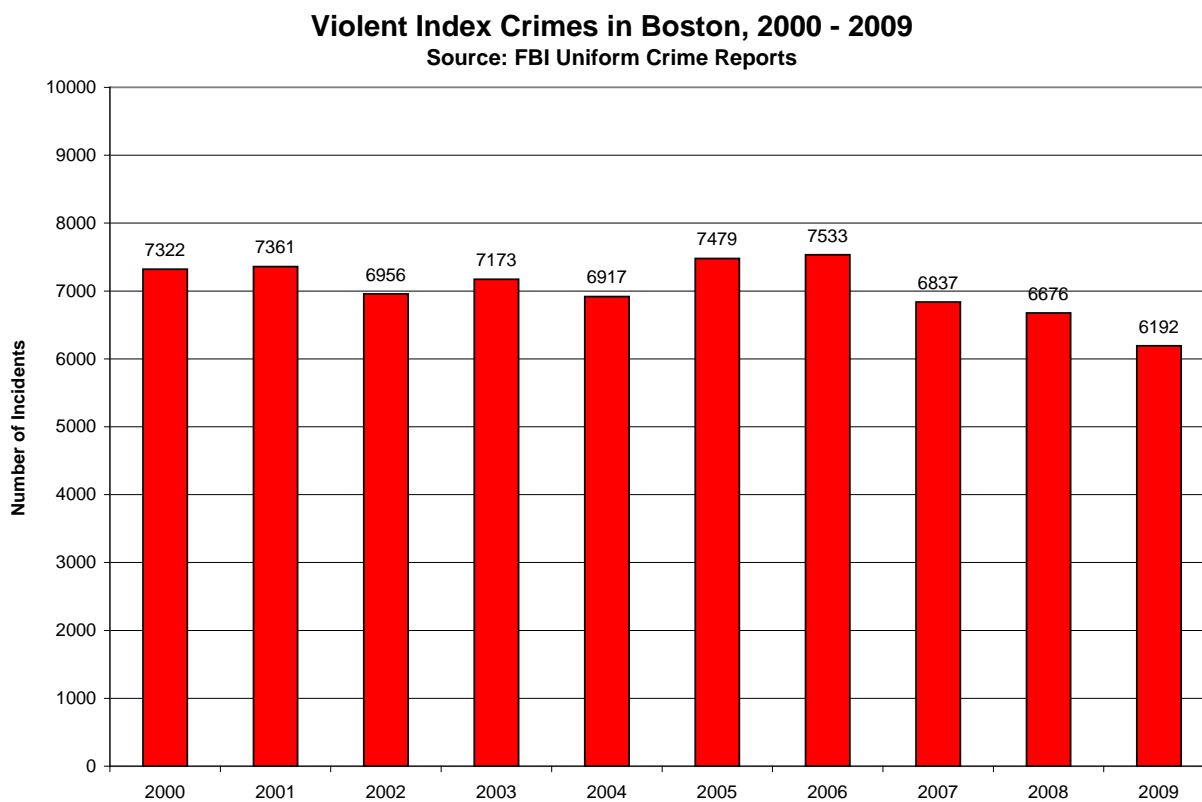


Figure 2.

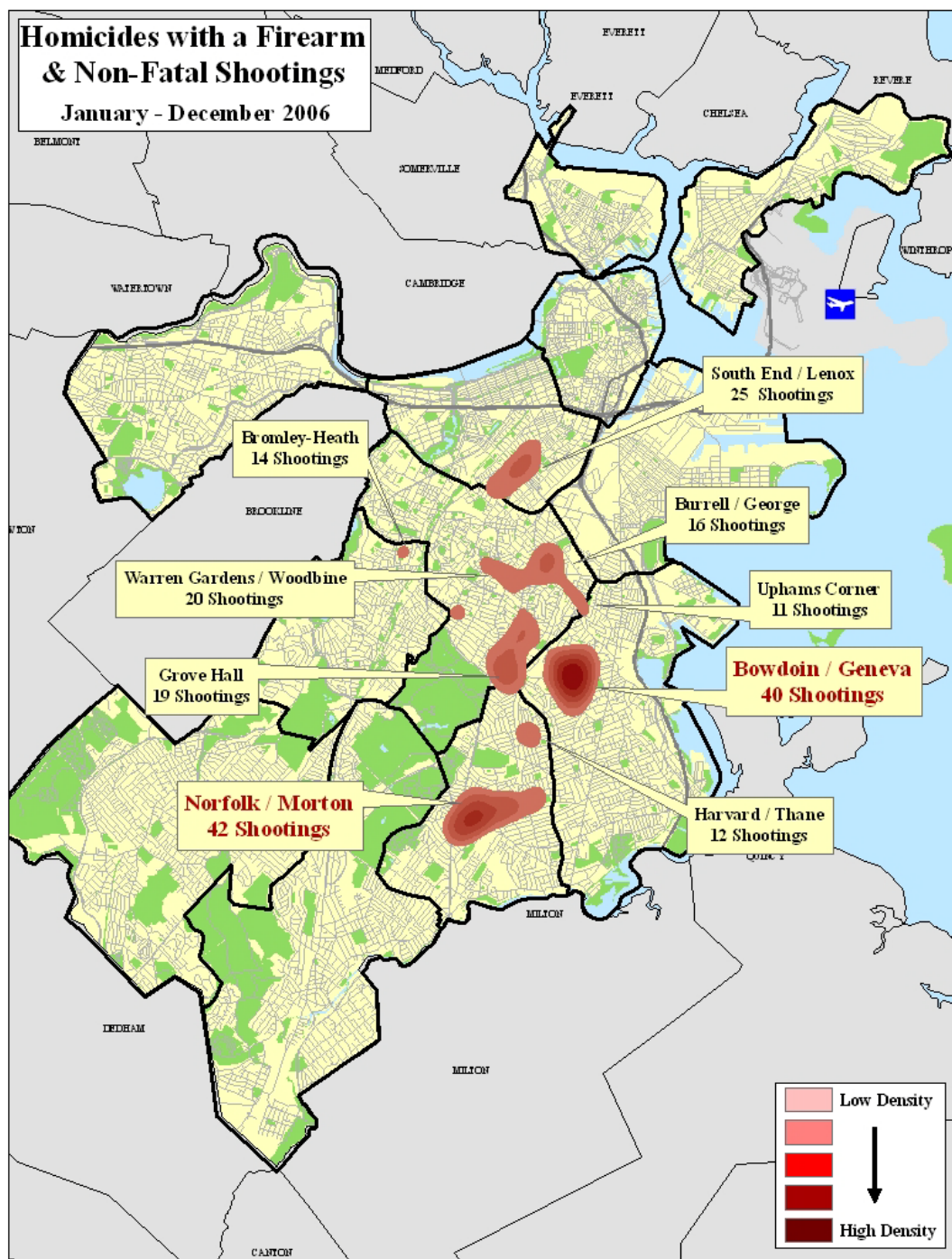


Figure 3.

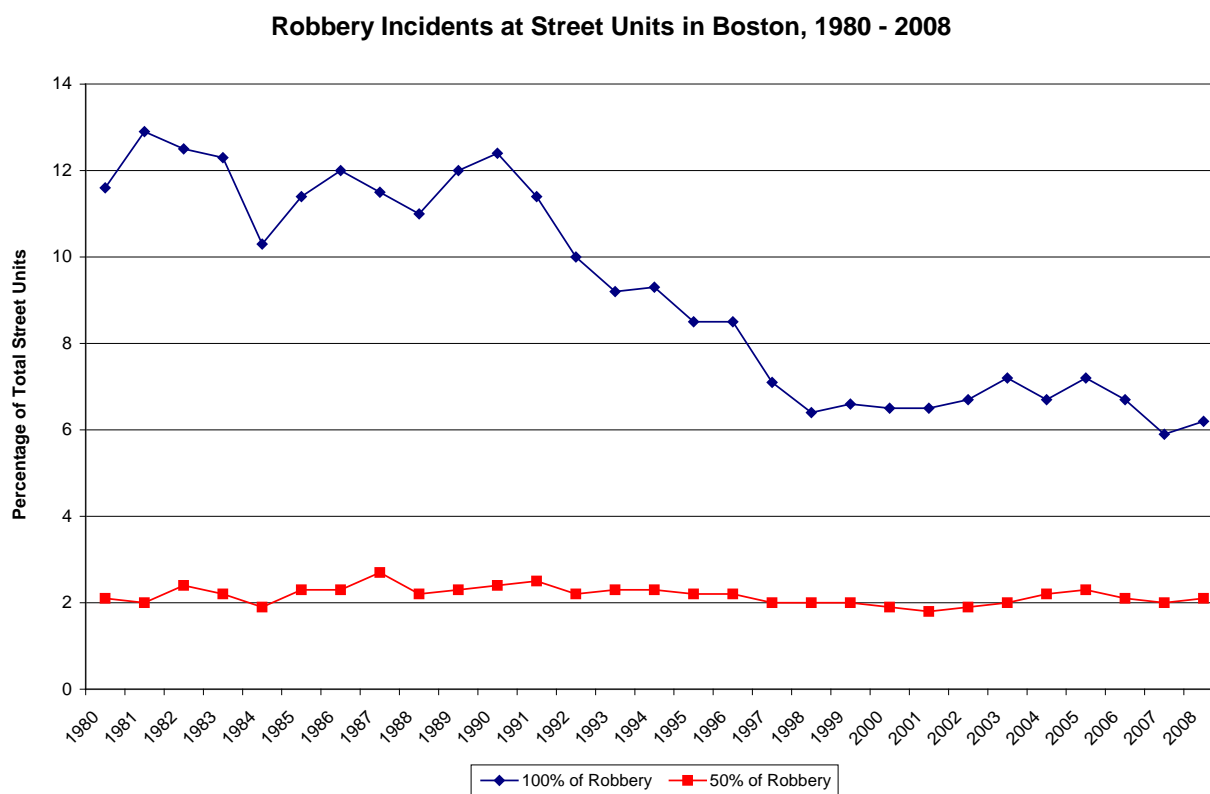
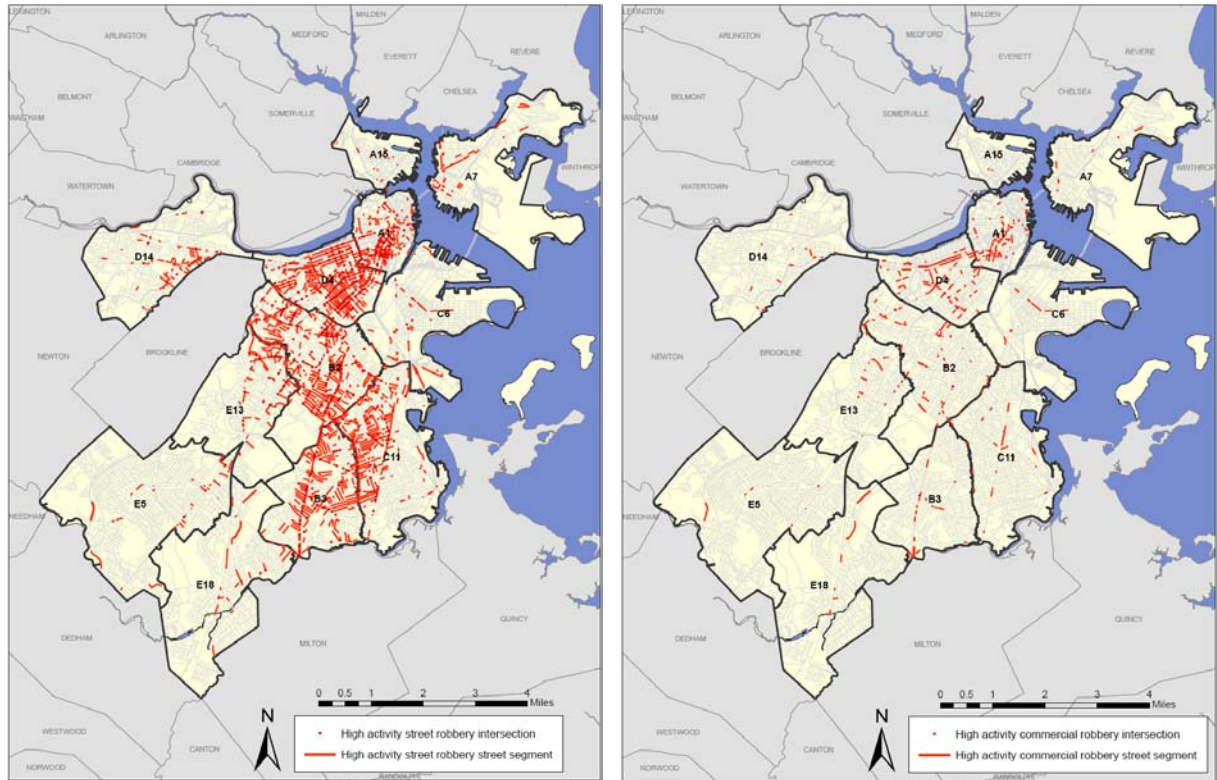


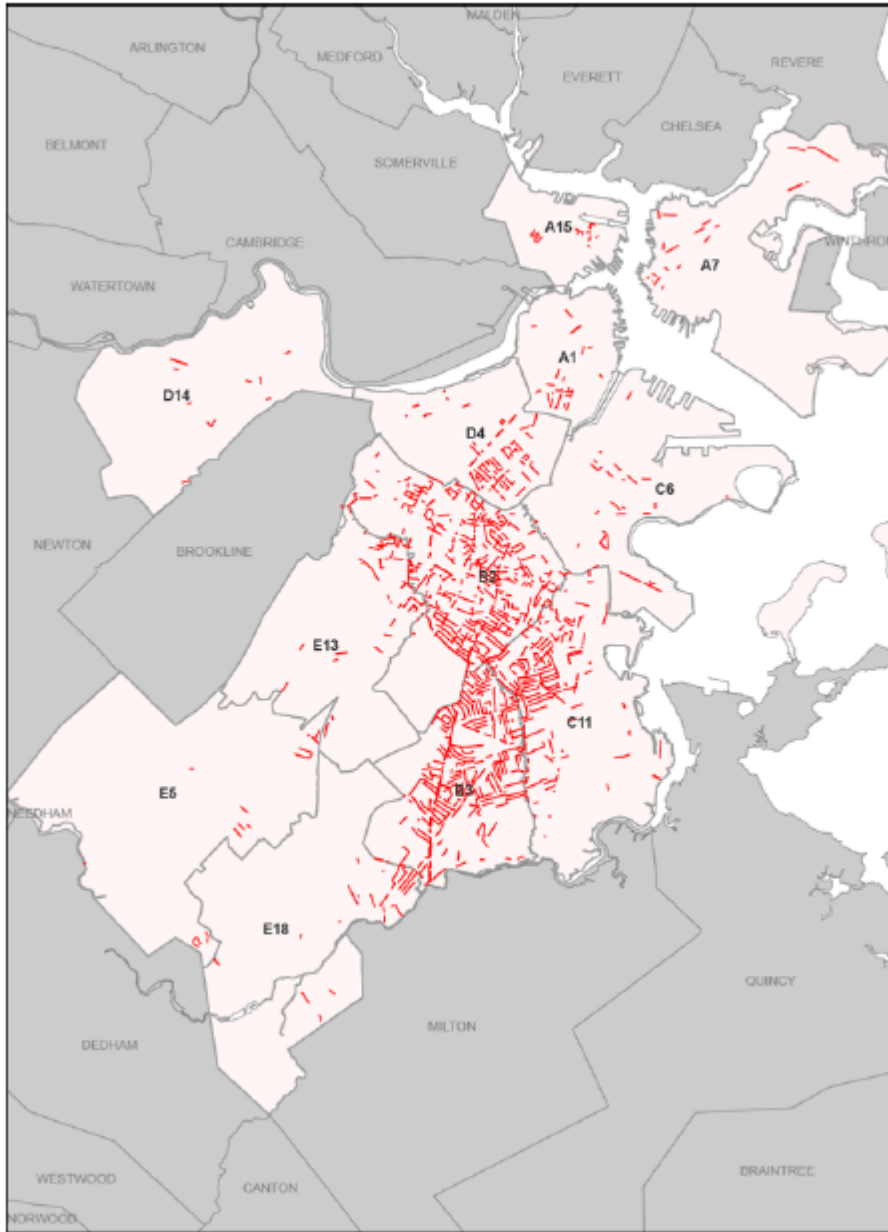
Figure 4.

Robbery in Boston, 1980 - 2008



- Street robbery: 8% of street units generate 66%
- Commercial robbery: 1% of street units generate 50%

Figure 5. High-Activity Shooting Street Units in Boston



5% of the street units generated 74% of fatal and non-fatal shootings in Boston between 1980 and 2008.

Figure 6.

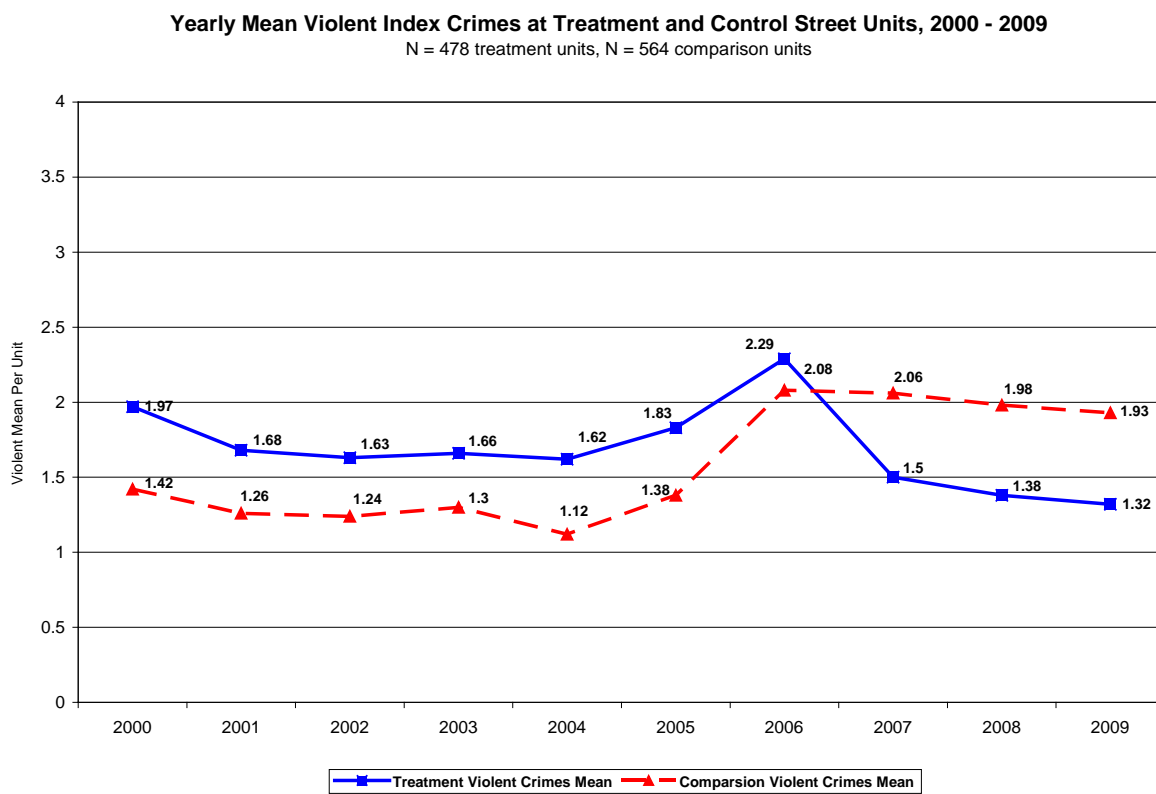


Figure 7. Spatial Distribution of SST Treatment and Control Street Units for Displacement and Diffusion Analysis

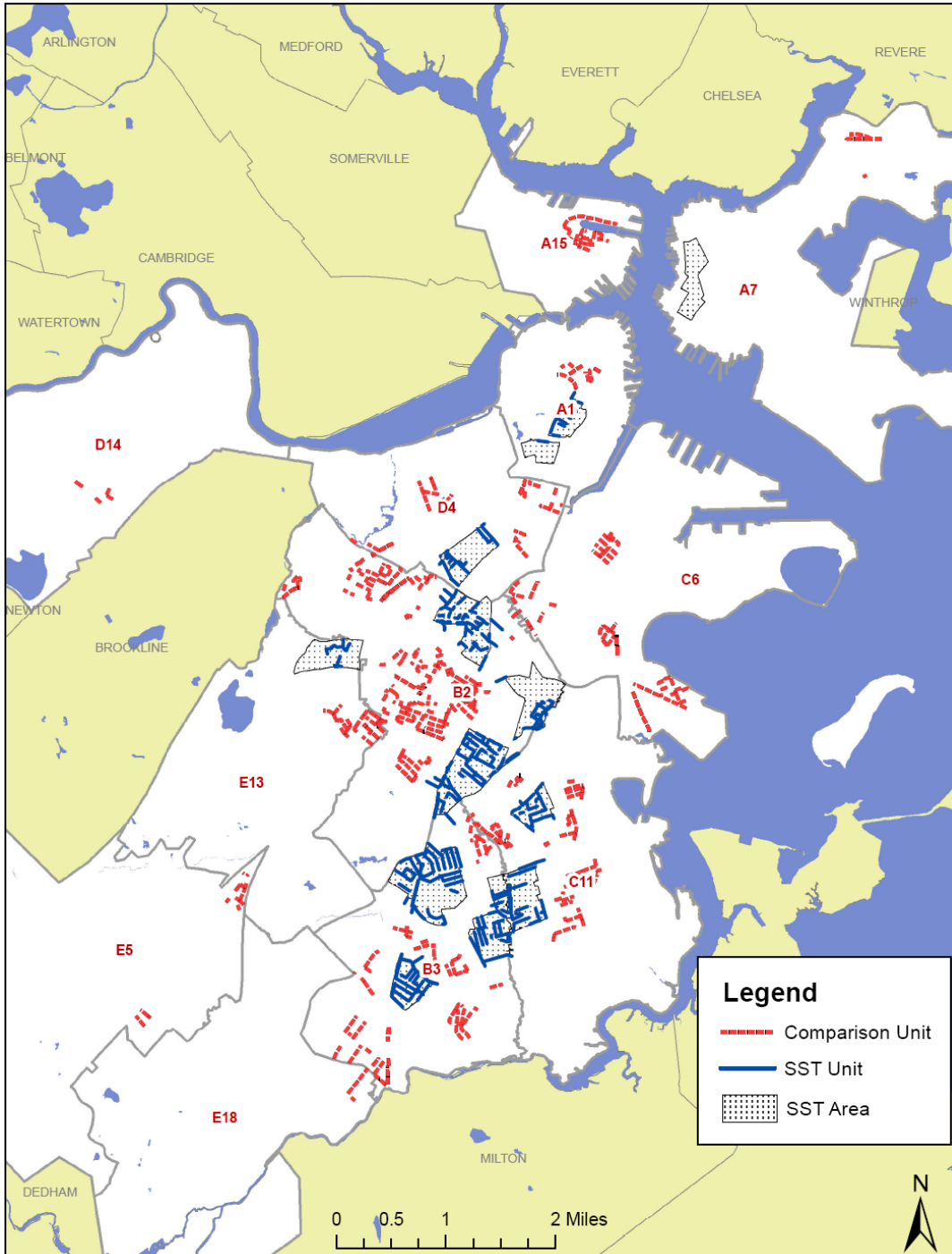


Table 1. Distribution of Gun Violence at Street Units in Boston, 1980-2008

N of incidents per street unit	N of street units	% of street units	Sum of incidents	% of incidents
0	25,245	88.5%	0	0.0%
1	1,923	6.7%	1,923	26.1%
2-4	1,037	3.6%	2,674	36.3%
5-9	269	0.9%	1,730	23.5%
10 or more	65	0.2%	1,032	14.0%
Total	28,530		7,359	

Table 2. Problem-Oriented Policing Interventions Implemented by Safe Street Teams

<u>Interventions</u>	<u>N</u>
<i>Situational / Environmental Interventions</i>	
Removed graffiti	29
Removed trash from street / park	27
Secured / razed abandoned building	23
Added / fixed lighting	15
Inspection / regulatory action on bar or liquor store	15
Regulatory actions against illegal rooming house / problem property	12
Removed abandoned car / trailer / boat	9
Fixed locks at public housing / apartment building	8
Posted / fixed signs (e.g. no trespassing, no loitering, etc.)	8
Installed CCTV	8
Removed overgrown vegetation	7
Evicted problem tenant	6
Repaired sidewalk	5
Secured / cleaned vacant lot	4
Fixed / installed fence	3
Dispensed crime prevention literature	3
Added trash receptacles	3
Inspection / regulatory actions against other private business	3
Removed other site feature that facilitated drug activity	2
Removed benches from park to prevent loitering	2
Change bus route / address public transportation problem	2
Rebuilt community room at housing project	1
<i>Enforcement Interventions</i>	
Focused enforcement on drug selling crews / drug market areas	38
Ongoing order maintenance to manage social disorder (public drinking, loitering, etc.)	13
Focused enforcement on street gangs	12
Focused enforcement on robbery crews / repeat robbers	7
Focused enforcement on burglars / shoplifters / stolen goods	6
Focused enforcement on public housing trespassers / unregulated vendors	3
<i>Community Outreach / Social Service Interventions</i>	
Planned and held a community event (e.g., block party, youth dialogue)	72
Established new recreational opportunities for area youth (e.g., basketball league)	27
Partnered w/ local agencies to provide youth with social services / opportunities	12
Street outreach to homeless, clinicians initiative	5
Provided school supplies / toys to local children	4
Other social service / opportunity provision activity	2
TOTAL	396

Table 3. Types of Problem-Oriented Policing Interventions Implemented by Each SST

<u>Team</u>	<u>Situational</u>	<u>Enforcement</u>	<u>Community / Social</u>	<u>Total</u>
Orchard Park	44	19	20	83
Grove Hall	16	6	25	47
Codman Square (B3)	18	6	14	38
Upham's Corner	20	4	12	36
Eagle Hill	29	4	2	35
Codman Square (C11)	12	6	15	33
Bowdoin / Geneva	13	3	8	23
Franklin Field	9	6	7	22
Downtown Crossing	10	6	2	18
Heath / Centre Street	6	5	7	18
Lower Roxbury / S. End	8	5	2	15
Morton / Norfolk	5	2	7	14
Tremont / Stuart	5	7	1	13
Total	195	79	122	396
Mean	15.0	6.1	9.4	30.5

Appendix

Local Media Coverage of BPD Safe Street Teams

Police teams credited with lowering crime

► **POLICING**
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plaints from some captains who want to move the teams.

"Police really don't like change," Braga said. "Some captains who have always done things a certain way and all of a sudden you put a limitation on their sovereignty, it gets very stressful for them."

Captain Frank Armstrong, president of the Boston Police Superior Officers Federation, said that supervisors know their districts intimately and where officers should be placed.

"I don't think they're protecting their sovereignty," said Armstrong, who stressed that he generally agrees with the program's mission. "I think they're reading the incident reports every day and they're trying to marshal their forces in the most efficient manner possible."

Davis said he has given more latitude to captains whose crime statistics have improved, but that generally teams should stay put, rather than move to respond to an emerging crisis.

"Chasing our tails is not a good strategy," Davis said in an interview.

In the neighborhoods where the teams have fanned out, opinions vary.

"We're ecstatic about them," said Jorge Martinez, executive director at Project RIGHT, an antiviolence organization in the Grove Hall section of Roxbury, where a Safe Street team patrols in the evenings. "They're accessible. . . . The interaction between these police officers and the community has been incredible."

Martinez said the officers show up to every community meeting, discuss crime-prevention strategies with neighborhood leaders, and frequently interact with young people, even collecting prom dresses for poorer students.

But in the Bowdoin-Geneva section of Dorchester, where several recent shootings and

Davis said that most teams have developed strong relationships with residents and local merchants, but reports like Andelman's trouble him.

"This is definitely a work in progress," he said. "These concepts are so different from how police used to do their jobs. It requires a constant amount of training. If we don't do that, the teams will revert to the old way of doing things."

The teams work in East Boston, Downtown Crossing, Jamaica Plain, the South End, Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester. The areas were picked because they were consistently plagued by violence or crime.

For example, the Bowdoin-Geneva area typically has among the highest number of shootings in the city; 51 in 2008, 24 in 2009, and 24 in 2010, according to police figures.

The analysis of the Safe Street teams program showed that robberies fell 19 percent and aggravated assaults, which includes shootings, fell 15 percent in the areas targeted by the teams.

The inability of the teams to reduce the number of homicides and sexual assaults is probably linked to the nature of the crimes, which are often between people who know each other, and primarily in the case of rapes, indoors, Davis said.

'The interaction between these police officers and the community has been incredible.'

JORGE MARTINEZ
Project RIGHT executive director

"It's a very difficult conversation about reducing the numbers in those two categories simply by police presence," he said. Officials should consider

Chasing strategy making headway

Federal study cites Safe Streets

By Maria Cramer
GLOBE STAFF

A strategy that puts teams of cops on a beat, an age-old crime-fighting tactic that Boston Police Commissioner Edward F. Davis revived in Boston more than four years ago, has helped reduce the number of shootings and robberies, according to a federally funded study.

The hot spots patrolled by the teams experienced a 17 percent drop in overall violent crime since the strategy was launched, compared with 2000-2006, when the teams were not in place.

Davis assigned the teams shortly after he was sworn in as commissioner in December 2006, hoping that the officers would develop relationships with community leaders and residents, a proactive approach known as community policing.

The city has 12 Safe Street teams: groups of five officers, supervised by a sergeant, who patrol on bikes and on foot and are assigned to high-crime areas.

"You can unleash the cops, flood an area, but there is a lot of research that shows that can have backfire effects. People can be more afraid," said Anthony Braga, a professor at the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice who conducted the study along with two other academics. "The way that these teams are oriented to engage the community is much more desirable."

Still, the study, conducted between 2007 and 2009, showed that the teams had no significant effect on reducing the number of homicides or sexual assaults.

And internal tensions over the program remain: Supervisors have questioned why teams cannot be moved from their designated spots to other nearby streets when crime worsens there; officials complained about the set hours of the teams, saying it made them too predictable to criminals; and some teams patrolled their hot spots but did little to engage with residents.

...ents, some officers are less involved, said Davida Andelman, chairwoman of the Greater Bowdoin Geneva Association.

Officers in her area tend to keep to themselves, she said, huddling together on their bicycles or sitting in their cruisers.

"I'm glad they're visible, but they need to be engaged quite a bit more with residents and it's unfortunate," said Andelman, who has lived in the neighborhood for almost 30 years. "In the olden days, you pointed to the beat cop, that person who really knew everybody. . . . This is what they need to be. They need to do better."

whether the teams could expand their reach and intervene in the gang conflicts that often lead to homicides, Braga said.

The study, which cost about \$125,000 and was funded through a grant by the US Department of Justice, was done objectively and will be reviewed by other academics, said Braga, who described himself as an unpaid advisor to Davis.

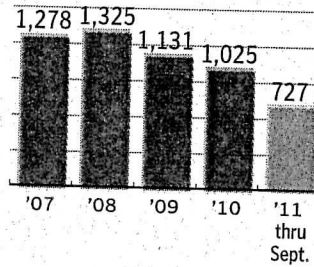
"We have valid statistical evidence that's defensible, that indicates this strategy is positive," Davis said.

Maria Cramer can be reached at mcramer@globe.com.

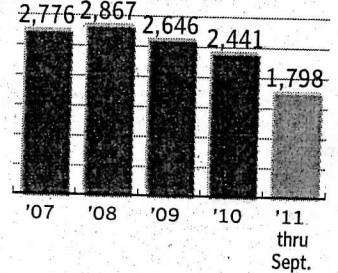
BOSTON CRIMES REPORTED

Crime statistics since the Safe Streets program began in 2006. These charts use more current numbers than were available for a federal study concluded in 2009.

Violent crime

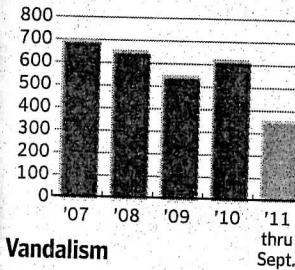


Property crime

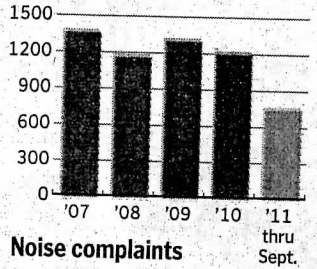


NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY-OF-LIFE ISSUES

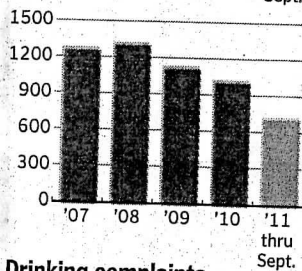
Gang complaints



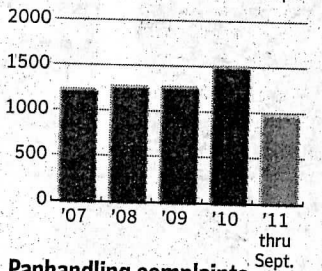
Drug complaints



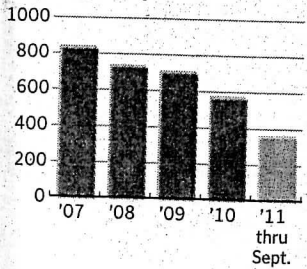
Vandalism



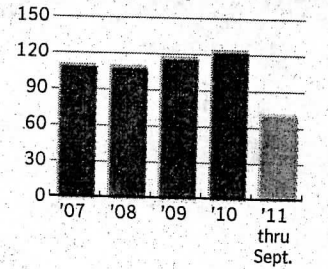
Noise complaints



Drinking complaints



Panhandling complaints



SOURCE: Boston Police Department

JAMES ABUNDIS/GLOBE STAFF

Neighbors notice as hands-on measures take root in neighborhoods

On this balmy Friday night, the voice of the public was a member of Jamaican heritage who called himself Evans. He stood one block outside Codman Square in Dorchester,



**Peter
GELZINIS**

teaching Boston Police Commissioner Ed Davis speak with a half-dozen unarmed officers who composed the "Safe Streets" patrol.

As Davis made his way back to his vehicle, he stopped to introduce himself. The plumber perched on the corner.

"Oh, I'm aware of who you are, sir," Evans told Davis. "People have been noticing. They see you out here and they appreciate what they see. That someone in your position would take the time to be out here — oh, yes, people take notice, sir."

Ed Davis thanked the gentleman as he gestured backward toward the officers who formed a visible, if somewhat awkward, presence on Washington St. "Those are the people who deserve your appreciation," Davis said.

"We are thankful for them, so, sir," Evans said, "very much so."

What turned out to be an eerily quiet Friday night on the meaner streets of this city did not begin that way. Well before sunset, the police commissioner found himself vept up in the pursuit of a suspect who had slipped a late police traffic stop for a possible weapons check by literally running out of his sight in the Four Corners end of Bowdoin Street.

As a combined surge of gang unit, bike and district cops blanketed the streets in and around the hot zone of Bowdoin Street and Geneva Ave., Ed Davis got out of his UV to walk through a dozen back yards. Though the suspect had managed to disappear, Davis relished the chance to engage in some old-fashioned shoe-leather police work.

"What excited me so much about getting this job," Davis would say later, "was the respect of being able to get out from behind the desk. Unfortunately, I don't get to do that nearly as much as I



STAFF PHOTO BY DAVID GOLDMAN

OUT FOR A STROLL: Ana Smith, 25, walks with her sons Javi, 6, and Julian, 6 months, past officers yesterday in Codman Square in Dorchester, one of the neighborhoods where new Street Safe Teams are being assigned by the BPD.

BPD assigns more officers to Safe Street Teams

By O'RYAN JOHNSON

The Boston Police Department yesterday rolled out additional police walking beats, which city leaders said are responsible for driving down the number of shootings in neighborhoods prone to violence.

"The numbers show these foot patrols are making a difference," Mayor

Thomas M. Menino said at a press conference in Codman Square, which will be home to one of the nine new Safe Street Teams.

Police Commissioner Edward Davis introduced teams to Grove Hall, downtown, and the Bowdoin and Geneva Avenue area in March, the day after Quintessa Blackwell, 18, was murdered. While they were

not created in response to the college student's murder, Davis said they are designed to prevent such crimes from happening.

"Walking beats get officers out of cruisers and back into neighborhoods," Davis said. "They allow officers to meet residents, speak with them, hear their concerns and develop a consensus on behavior for

a neighborhood."

The new teams are headed to Codman Square in Dorchester, Morton Street and Blue Hill Avenue in Mattapan; the Franklin Field area on Blue Hill Avenue in Dorchester; 1850 Washington St. in the South End; Orchard Park in Roxbury; Eagle Hill in East Boston, and Egleston Square in Jamaica Plain.

would like."

So far, Ed Davis' stewardship has had a back-to-the-future ring about it: More cops out of the cars and in the streets. The "Safe Streets" initiative could be seen as the return of the beat cop times three or four.

Instead of one familiar cop making the rounds on foot and melding into the rhythm of a neighborhood, "Safe Streets" provides a team of four to six cops, maintaining a more formidable presence in those hotter spots.

"Thank You" were the two words Davis kept hearing Friday night, relayed from cops stationed in and around Codman and Egleston squares. The gratitude came from shop owners along Washington Street who felt they now had some leverage against kids roosting outside their businesses. And from residents who've begun to feel as if they can navigate their way to a half-gallon of milk without having to take a gut check.

Ed Davis began his journey through the streets the other

night at a roll call of the gang unit. He thanked the undercover squad for its efforts in snagging at least one gun a night off the streets.

Not long before a soft rain began to fall, Davis' ramble across the city ended in Jamaica Plain, talking to three rookie officers and their boss, Lt. Michael Kearns, who were planted on what had become a placid corner outside Egleston Square.

Kearns told Davis how the feedback his Safe Street Teams were picking up from

crime watch groups along with grateful residents and merchants was helping to formulate overall investigative strategies.

"How do you like it?" Davis asked one of the rookie cops. "It's all right," a young female cop replied. "But to tell you the truth, sir, I'd rather be shagging 911 calls in the car."

The impatience of youth sent a soft smile across the police commissioner's face, one that seemed to say, "You'll have plenty of time to chase 911 calls."

Walking beats seen to curb crime, inspire trust

► **POLICE**
Continued from Page A1

Officers on foot patrol were a common sight in Boston until the 1950s, when they slowly began moving to cruisers, largely in an effort to improve response time. But Davis, who reduced violent crime by 62 percent in Lowell during his 12 years leading that city's Police Department from 1994 to 2006, used walking beats extensively there. He arrived in Boston proclaiming their value, especially in a city where trust between police and residents had severely eroded.

Linskey said the walking beat program works because officers have a permanent and visible

presence in violent areas where they previously only appeared during major problems.

He said officers on foot are building positive relationships with residents, disrupting drug sales, and "taking the anonymity away" from criminals by becoming familiar with people who live or frequent the neighborhoods.

Sergeant Nora Baston, who leads the Grove Hall walking beat team, said some officers initially perceived the walking beats as soft or ineffectual community relations ploys. She said colleagues teased her for her "Mickey Mouse assignment." Now, Baston said, other officers ask her to tell them when the team has an opening.

She said it took some adjusting for her to understand that she had a job to do besides making arrests and answering calls, usually from people in crisis. "The old commissioner, that's all they wanted — arrests, stats, stats, stats," she said.

But Davis, she said, told her he wanted something else, too. "He wanted interacting," she said. "I'm not just here to put on a dog and pony show. I'm really there... so people really trust us."

Baston said the job also involves enforcement. A typical shift might include basketball games with youths, outreach to parents with advice about summer jobs, and a drug arrest. She said residents have approached

her with information about crime, including one tip about the high-profile slaying of an 18-year-old on an MBTA bus in March.

Every conversation is a sign of progress, she said, in neighborhoods where people used to turn their backs on her for fear of seeming a snitch. "Our commissioner has really put emphasis on this — reinstituting trust with the community," she said.

Many who live and work in those communities say they have noticed a difference. Dmitri Ziogas, who owns Mythos Pizza on Bowdoin Street, said his struggle to operate a thriving pizza shop in one of the city's most dangerous neighborhoods has become a lot

easier thanks to the near-constant police presence.

Jorge Martinez, a Grove Hall community leader who runs the nonprofit Project RIGHT, agreed, saying the walking beat officers are rebuilding bonds that broke in the years following crime reductions of the 1990s.

"It's repairing somewhat a relationship that was pretty solid 10 years ago," he said. "Police corruption, police abuse, driving while black, all this negative stuff has happened... This is a good thing. They're developing relationships, and those are long-lasting."

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Police plan more foot patrols in hot spots

Boston pilot program is touted as a success

By Suzanne Smalley
GLOBE STAFF

Police Commissioner Edward F. Davis is planning to launch new walking beats in high crime areas of Boston after three neighborhoods where police launched a pilot program this spring experienced significant reductions in major categories of crime.

In the pilot program, three teams of six police officers began walking beats March 10 in the Bowdoin-Geneva section of Dorchester, the Grove Hall section of Roxbury, and Downtown Crossing. The total number of robberies in those neighborhoods declined by 10, from 41 in the three months before the program began to 31 in the three months after, police said. Shootings and drug arrests also declined in the same period.

"There's reductions in most everything across the board," said Deputy Superintendent Daniel Linskey, who tracks Boston's crime trends. "What we can't measure in this, but I can measure in phone calls and e-mails I get from people in the street and merchants, is the relationships that are starting to develop with the kids. There was an animosity between the officers and some of the youth when they first started, and now there's a mutual respect, and they're waving to each other across the street."

Police officials are studying crime statistics in other violence-prone areas of the city to decide on two or three new areas for teams of walking beat officers to begin patrolling in coming months. More could be added later.

Six months into his tenure leading the department, walking beats have become Davis's signature

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REPORTED INCIDENTS IN 3 PILOT AREAS
Reports may or may not lead to an arrest.

Crime cycle: New Bike patrols are proving to be very effective

By JOHN LYNDS
john@eastietimes.com



JOHN LYNDS PHOTO

East Boston's new bicycle officers, from left, Kevin Lockhead, Ralph Amoroso and Joe Greco, with Sergeant Kenneth O'Brien.

You may have noticed them patrolling the streets. This summer, police bicycle patrols out of East Boston's District-7 Police Station have been very effective in curbing crime in the neighborhood.

As part of Mayor Thomas Menino and Police Commissioner Ed Davis' Safe Streets Initiative, the bicycle police in Eastie said they are able to gain access to parks, alleys, and other hard-to-reach areas better than if they were in patrol cars. This added benefit has enabled bicycle patrols to keep a watchful eye on places like the Greenway, the Urban Wild, city parks and problem areas in Eagle Hill.

"The program has received a lot

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Bikes // CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of compliments from residents," said Sergeant Kenneth O'Brien. "A lot of the gang activity we once saw in places like Eagle Hill has moved away because they can no longer hide from police behind building or in alley ways. It's been a great addition to our usual crisscross patrols and other crime-fighting efforts."

The bicycles the police use are fully equipped with sirens, flashers and radios. The police officers riding bicycles had to go through an extensive and grueling training process before hitting the streets.

"It wasn't easy," said Officer Ralph Amoroso. "We had to learn how to ride down stairs, off curbs, police chasing maneuvers---it was very vigorous training."

All that training paid off and officers like Kevin Lockhead love the stealth aspects of patrolling on the bicycles.

"It's the element of surprise," said Lockhead. "A lot of times, criminals don't even see or hear us coming until we are right on top of them. It has a lot of advantages over using a patrol car."

The bicycle officers patrol all of Eastie but target hotspots daily, from 4 to 11:45 p.m.

"We are out every night patrolling parks, baseball fields, back alleys, and I think after a few months, many criminals got the idea there's no safe

place left to hide in East Boston and took their activity elsewhere," said Officer Joe Greco.

The Safe Streets Initiative was launched by Menino and Davis here in Eastie back in 2007. At that time, the police expanded the walking beat program to Eagle Hill. Later, Eastie added bicycles to complement the beat cops and patrol cars in the neighborhood.

"This is a great program," said Menino. "Residents and business owners have been asking for bicycle officers for a long time, and now with an additional 180 officers on the police force we are able to give an added layer of security to the residents and business owners in East Boston."

Davis added that Eastie has had a long tradition of good community policing and the latest efforts will enhance officers' efforts in the community.

"The good thing about East Boston is that there is very little crime, so we can target areas, like Eagle Hill, where crime is a little higher than the rest of the neighborhood," said Davis. "Here, officers will target quality of life crimes like drug dealing and break-ins. This, we hope, will quickly and proactively make a difference on the crime experienced here while bringing the police department closer to residents and business owners."

Deterring crime on 2 wheels

By Akilah Johnson

Globe Staff / October 3, 2011

Everyone has a story to tell, and on this day on this street, Boston Police officers Pat Flaherty and Stephanie O'Sullivan are there to listen.

Amos Lamour stops them near the top of Bowdoin Street to describe how he was punched in the left eye last year and rushed to the hospital with a fractured orbital bone. "I almost died, but God was with me," he says. Now, Lamour does not have problems, he says, for two reasons: He works nights, and there are more police along Dorchester's Geneva Avenue-Bowdoin corridor, part of a neighborhood that has witnessed a spate of violent deaths.

Farther down, near Eunice Street, a woman recalls when officers patrolled the neighborhood on horses. Now, they use bicycles.

Outside
Walgreens

, where Bowdoin meets Geneva, Alex Bennett's father tells the officers his son, who just turned 10, was looking for wrestling action figures. "He started youth watch on our street last year by himself," Alex's father says, beaming as his son exchanges a high five with O'Sullivan.

This, police brass say, is exactly the point of bike patrols - to make police officers more visible, and more human. That personal connection is a key element in the department's strategy to stem violence along the corridor, which has endured at least seven homicides within a 2-mile radius this year, the most recent Sept. 25, when two teenage boys were shot, one fatally, while making a quick trip to the corner store.

Surveillance cameras will be mounted, patrols increased, and collaborations strengthened with neighborhood watch groups. And undercover investigations will be launched, the most recent of which netted 14 men wanted on drug charges.

Boston's police department has Safe Street Teams patrolling hot spots in 14 neighborhoods. In the neighborhood defined by Bowdoin and Geneva, eight officers ride bikes from 4 p.m. until about midnight.

To expand coverage, the department enlists probationary officers to fill the void when a member of the team is away, said Deputy Superintendent Randall Halstead.

The bikes, Halstead said, are an extension of officers walking a beat and getting to know residents.

"It's more effective," Halstead said, less than a block from a sidewalk memorial that marks where Jaivon Blake, 16, was shot dead Sept. 25 "What it all boils down to is having them talk to us, because we're only as effective as we can be when people talk to us."

Blake's 14-year-old friend is recovering from his gunshot wounds and expected to survive, a police spokeswoman said. No arrests have been made in the case.

On this day, Flaherty and O'Sullivan, both June graduates of the police academy, trade in their patrol cars for bikes, complete with lights and sirens, halfway through their 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. shift.

"It's way more personal when we're on the bikes," said Flaherty, born and raised in Dorchester. "We're almost forced to have an interaction."

"Because," O'Sullivan said, "we're right at street level with them."

They hop off their bikes and walk inside businesses to talk to clerks and owners. At Walgreens, they ask the security guard how things are going.

"You guys were getting hit there for awhile," O'Sullivan says, as the guard assures her there have been no problems of late.

And when they pass houses with children carrying backpacks, O'Sullivan calls out: "How you doing guys? How was school today?"

"Good," the children respond in enthusiastic unison.

"Kids are our best customers," Flaherty explains.

They do more conventional police work, too, responding to calls for service and quality of life issues, such as broken windows, graffiti, and public drinking.

The officers stop and talk with elderly men sitting on milk crates at Bowdoin and Norton streets, where Victor Gomes was murdered during the July 4th weekend.

Not far from there, O'Sullivan spots a silver Chrysler Sebring parked two feet from the curb in a bus stop, hazard lights flashing. The license plate appears to have expired.

"Pat, I got one for you," O'Sullivan said, turning to her partner. "Just check it out."

Flaherty radios in the plate number. Had they been in a car, the pair could have done this themselves with the dashboard computer.

It turns out the registration is current. The car is a rental, but the company had not renewed the sticker on the license plate. So the officers let the driver go with instructions to tell the rental car company to fix the problem.

You never know, Flaherty says. Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was caught because of a traffic stop.

"Nothing," he said, "is routine."

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