

# Gunshot-spotting system gets an A+

Officials and South Side residents praise the first month of experience with Minneapolis' new tool to detect shots.

By [David Chanen](#), Star Tribune

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Earlier this month, a man walking his dog about 11 p.m. in the Central neighborhood of south Minneapolis saw some kids wrestling with each other. He didn't think much of it until he was a half-block away and heard a gunshot.

He was going to call police from his nearby home. But by the time he got to his front door, four squad cars already had arrived.

Sheryl Kabat, director of Central neighborhood's Weed and Seed crime prevention program, told the man's story on Tuesday at an event to hail the first month of the Police Department's newest crime-fighting tool, ShotSpotter. It is a series of sensors that can pinpoint the location of gunshots so officers can respond more quickly.

ShotSpotter has triggered dispatches to 69 suspected gunshot locations. The results: six felony and misdemeanor arrests, two recovered guns and a recovered stolen car. Information from ShotSpotter also is being used in homicide, robbery and shooting investigations.

Police Chief Tim Dolan said the response time to ShotSpotter calls has been less than a minute.

"We're not just fishing anymore in a big lake," he said. "Word is getting out how quick officers can get to the scene."

But authorities haven't been able to charge anyone with firing the shots that were detected so far, said Lt. Greg Reinhardt, who oversees the ShotSpotter system.

"We've caught people fleeing the scene with guns, but haven't made the connection if they were the same guns used at the shootings," he said.

Before ShotSpotter, a resident who heard shots called 911 and police were sent to a three-to-four block area to search, often with little success.

"We might not get somebody from each call," Dolan said. "But we plot where shots are fired within the area where we have sensors. And those grids are now consistently empty."

The sensors haven't yet been set up on the North Side, but are expected to be active in March. When they are, the 80 sensors will cover about 4 square miles across the city that are responsible for 50 percent of the more than 5,000 "shots fired" calls police get each year. ShotSpotter cost more than \$325,000.

Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak said technology alone can't win the battle against crime. He was at the Legislature Tuesday morning, attempting to get the state to restore local aid that he said is needed for public safety.

It's unclear what actual impact ShotSpotter is having on the overall crime picture in Minneapolis, but City Council Member Gary Schiff said he saw results "as soon as the switch was flipped." Through Tuesday, violent crime citywide is down nearly 19 percent compared to the same time last year.

Tuesday's event was held at Little Earth Youth Development Center. A drum group chanted a song to honor the people in the room and wish them safe travels.

Bill Ziegler, executive director of Little Earth of United Tribes, said crime at the Native American housing complex in south Minneapolis has decreased 30 percent in the last year. And with ShotSpotter in place, they should see an even more dramatic drop, he said.

"People ask what we're doing differently at Little Earth than the rest of the city," he said. "I have to attribute our success to the people of Little Earth. They took a stand against crime. A year ago, we were numb to the gunshots. Now it happens so rarely it sets people off."

David Chanen • 612-673-4465 • [dchanen@startribune.com](mailto:dchanen@startribune.com)