

## Sacramento Safe Community Partnership (Ceasefire): An Initial Progress Report

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*By Stewart Wakeling, Daniela Gilbert, Tim Dunham, and Brian Heller de Leon*

The Sacramento Safe Community Partnership (SSCP) began its work in the spring of 2010. Concerned about youth violence in Sacramento, a group of energetic and thoughtful leaders from Sacramento Area Congregations Together (a faith-based organizing non-profit commonly referred to as ACT), local congregations and other faith-based community groups, the Sacramento Police Department, and the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) began to build a local version of what is often referred to as Boston's Ceasefire. This brief report describes the development of the SSCP, the strategy they employed, and the progress of their work from launch in the late summer of 2010 through approximately the end of 2011.

**The Strategy:** The SSCP decided to root their strategy in Boston's well-known and successful 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 high-quality operational components to complement the call-ins, forming a robust local initiative. These components

### Timeline of Key Events Leading to Launch

**Introduction:** 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.

*Figure 1*

include the remarkable commitment by clergy leaders to “night walks” – described in more detail in *Figure 2* – in the neighborhoods most impacted by violence, well-designed services and supports through SETA, and a strategic enforcement effort. Key to the enforcement effort was the Sacramento Police Department’s Problem-Oriented Policing Unit, an effective and resourceful unit concerned largely, though not exclusively, with reducing street violence in some of Sacramento’s toughest neighborhoods.

**The Challenge:** Initially, SSCP considered going citywide with the initiative but concerns about the effect of a struggling national economy on city revenues coupled with the partners’ strong desire to ensure an ample supply of quality services and supports led them to restrict their focus. They worked closely with the California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC) to analyze serious violence in south Sacramento. Based on this analysis, the partners decided to focus on an ongoing conflict between the city’s two most actively violent groups. These two groups were primarily active in the “Mack Road corridor” in south Sacramento.

Sacramento’s homicide rate has decreased markedly since 2006, when it climbed to above 50 for the year. 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. Two groups of young people in a major, ongoing conflict made this collection of neighborhoods almost certainly the most dangerous in the city. The conflict was also one of the city’s most intractable, for the

better part of two years resisting the attempts of the Sacramento Police Department and its law enforcement and community partners to stop the 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 are 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.*

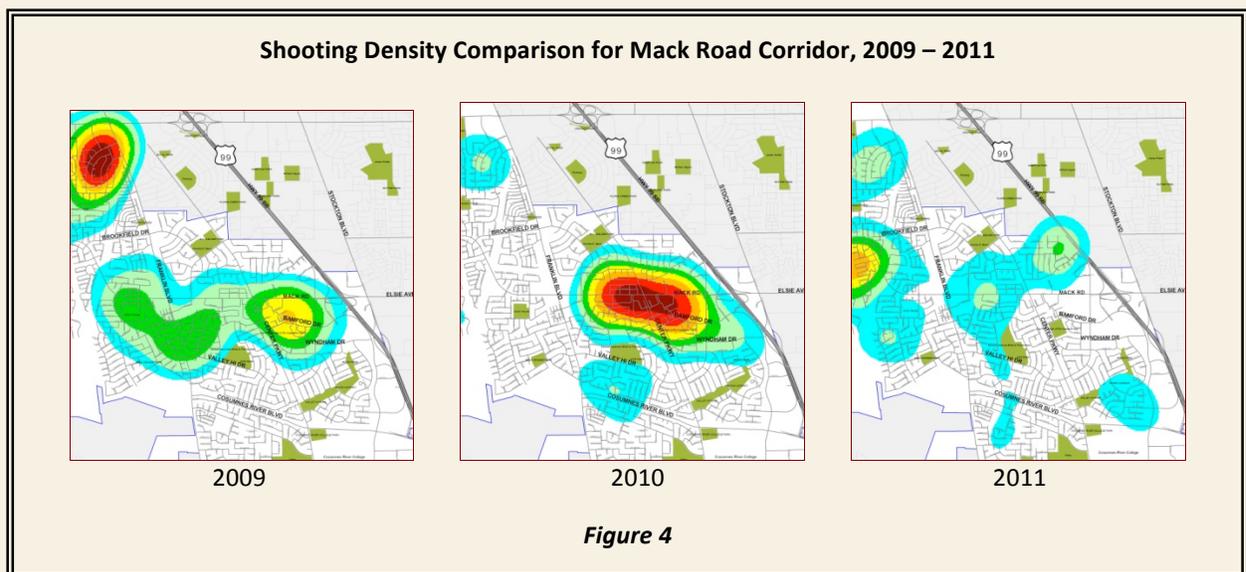
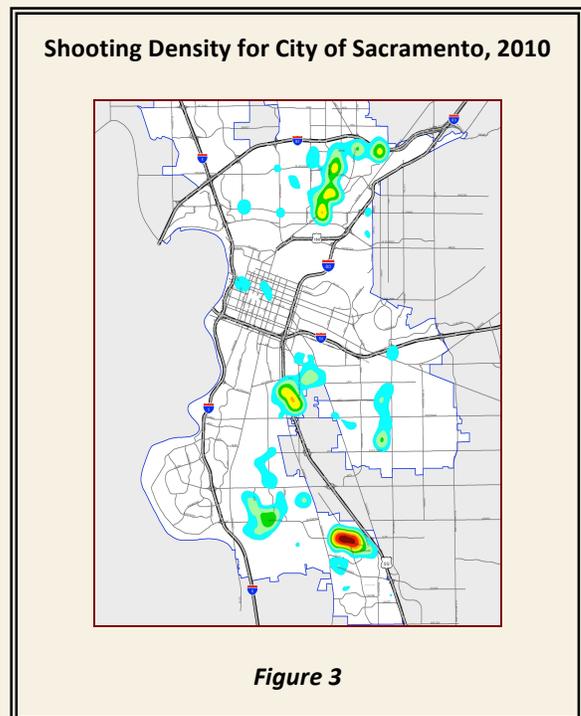
While night walks are led by clergy and faith-based leaders, the night walks are not the only way faith-based leadership plays a significant role in Sacramento’s Ceasefire effort. In addition to playing a leadership role in strategy design, clergy and other faith-based leaders speak at call-ins, organize and host gatherings with highest risk youth to build relationships with them and their families, counsel high-risk youth, and hold community events including health fairs and job fairs for them.

**Clergy and faith-based leaders have spent over 9,000 volunteer hours on night walks—or the equivalent of over four full time staff positions—working in a strategic and focused way on addressing the issue of local youth violence.**

**Progress to Date:** The implementation of the strategy began in the late summer of 2010 and became fully operational with the convening of the first call-in in early November 2010. Over approximately the first year of the initiative, 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. In the first five months alone, 75 young men had attended call-ins, helping spread the word widely early in the initiative, and creating a sense of momentum and enthusiasm among the partners. 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 (see *Figure 2*), the high quality of the service initiative overseen by SETA, and the partners’ close coordination with law enforcement agencies signaled the community’s determination to ending violence. So, what happened?

- ◆ **Making a safer neighborhood:** *Figures 3 and 4* include density maps of shootings in Sacramento as a whole and the Mack Road corridor in south Sacramento, in particular, for the years 2009 through 2011. *Figure 3*, a density map of the whole city for 2010, makes clear the Mack Road corridor was the “hottest” of the city’s hot spots in terms of shootings. *Figure 4* compares the density of shootings each year from 2009 - 2011 in the Mack Road corridor. 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.



◆ **The larger context: what the reduction means when compared with the rest of Sacramento:** *Figure 5*

5 compares the percentage decrease in shootings from four perspectives:

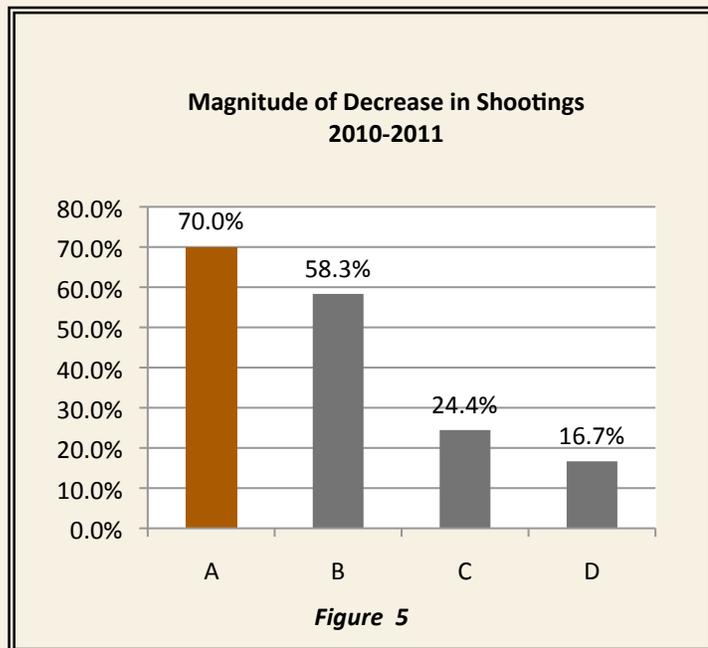
◇ A in this figure illustrates the percentage drop in shootings between SSCP's primary focus—the groups in conflict: a 70 percent drop.

◇ B in this figure illustrates the percentage 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.

◇ C in this figure 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.

◇ D in this figure illustrates the drop in shootings citywide: a 16.7 percent drop.

◇ *The decrease in shootings between the focus groups and in the focus area 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 suggests the collective efforts of the SSCP partners coincided with a significant and sustained decrease in violence among the groups in conflict and in the Mack Road corridor. At the time of this report in early 2012, the focus of the partners in south Sacramento is mostly on maintaining the gains made there.



◆ **Participant Recidivism:** Only five of the first 75 participants (those that participated in call-ins more than a year ago) in this highest-risk population have been rearrested for violent felonies including a firearm. We are encouraged by this but note that it's very early to draw overall conclusions regarding the effect of the intervention on recidivism. There are several reasons for this, including time lags in updating state and local records on re-arrest and re-incarceration and the lack of good baseline comparisons for the city and county of Sacramento. We will provide more information on recidivism (including its relationship to participation in services) as it becomes available.

**Conclusion:** The in-depth analysis we conducted of violence in south Sacramento at the beginning of this work suggests that group violence accounts for approximately 52 percent of the violence there. Our preliminary analysis of other violent incidents (drug-related violence and domestic violence, for example) suggest that individuals involved in criminally-active groups are responsible for another 25 percent of the area's violence. Therefore, the SSCP's progress thus far represents an effective investment in perhaps the most challenging crime problem in Sacramento.

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