

**2017**

**AN INDEPENDENT  
EVALUATION OF SAFE &  
SOUND'S COMMUNITY  
BUILDING STRATEGIES**



**SAFE & SOUND**

## Acknowledgements

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# BUILDING COMMUNITY: WHAT WORKS MOST?

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## *Message from the Executive Director*

Greetings!

In 2014, the Safe & Sound Board of Directors approved a strategic plan that significantly shifted the organization's operations and structure. The mission: **to unite residents, youth, law enforcement and community resources to build safe and empowered neighborhoods**. The new strategy was built around staff community safety teams working to bring residents, youth, law enforcement, and many community partners and government resources together.

The community safety team model is evidence-informed and designed to improve neighborhood collective efficacy, thereby improving public safety. Upon restructuring in January 2015, it was very important to effectively evaluate the work we were doing. We collect outputs and track activity monthly, but wanted a more comprehensive and granular evaluation of the impact of those activities.

The following report summarizes an evaluation of the first two years of our new strategy. Much of the work we do takes time and persistence, and the results of this early assessment are very encouraging.

Data-driven decision-making is a core tenant of our strategic plan, and the evaluation was meant to inform our work as much as it was to evaluate it. Safe & Sound will be using these results to intensify activities that demonstrated statistical significance in improving collective efficacy and crime trends. We have also expanded neighborhood boundaries, shifted output goals and are exploring other changes that will maximize our effectiveness.

One of the key findings in this evaluation confirms something we have long believed: resident-centric collaboration is key to building neighborhood safety. The neighborhoods that showed the most improvement, on all indicators, are those with strong resident-led collaborative efforts. As indicated by our mission statement, this work requires true collaboration, and we thank our many community partners for their commitment to serving Milwaukee residents and youth. Most importantly, we acknowledge the residents and youth who lead community change.

Safe & Sound has a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between the community and law enforcement, and we take this responsibility very seriously. Unfortunately, the timing of this evaluation coincides with a significant spike in violent crime across the country, as well as intensifying community-police conflict, validating that there is much more work to be done. By evaluating our impact and leveraging data and research to influence our daily work, we are maximizing our resources to achieve this very important mission.

Sincerely,



**Katie Sanders**

## Introduction

All forms of violence and disorder affect the health and well-being of children and adults living in Wisconsin and Milwaukee. Recognizing the need to combine community organizing, youth development and law enforcement, Safe & Sound was founded in 1998 to reduce and prevent violence in communities across Wisconsin and is currently one of 28 sites funded through the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program under the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Focusing initially on funding after-school programming for at-risk youth, Safe & Sound has evolved into its current structure through an intensive strategic planning process that launched in 2013. During that process, Safe & Sound consulted a wide body of research on neighborhood safety, including the effects of disorder crime as researched by Kelling and Wilson in 1982, as well as the relationship of neighborhood safety to collective efficacy, as presented by Rob Sampson in his research on Chicago neighborhoods.<sup>1,2</sup>

Safe & Sound's program structure is based in the community crime prevention theory of collective efficacy which highlights residents' "shared expectations and mutual engagement in regards to local social control." Safe & Sound attempts to increase community collective efficacy and improve community-police relations through a three-pronged strategy to unite residents, youth, law enforcement, and community resources in ten neighborhoods targeted for their high rates of crime in Milwaukee Police Districts (MPD) Two, Three, Four, Five, and Seven.



Safe & Sound's "community safety team" approach is designed to break the cycle of crime, violence and disinvestment and build a cycle of regrowth. Community safety teams – with one community organizer, youth organizer, and Community Prosecution Unit (CPU) coordinator—work to build collective efficacy, cultivate safety and order, engage youth, capitalize on and leverage existing initiatives and improve public safety.

On each team, a community organizer and youth organizer work together in two neighborhoods. The community organizer works with adult residents to help establish block clubs and safety task forces, utilizing community meetings and events to bring residents together and build social cohesion. The youth organizer supports young residents in bringing their voice into community planning, identifies and activates youth-led community improvement-projects, and connects youth to available resources and leadership development opportunities.

The third member of the team is a CPU coordinator, who works out of police district stations as a civilian liaison to the community and administrative coordinator of a team of city and county departments who collaboratively address nuisance properties. This community safety team of three works together to unite the constituency they each work with—residents, youth and law enforcement—in a cohesive strategy.

<sup>1</sup> "Broken Windows" by George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson published in March 1982 issue of *The Atlantic*.

<sup>2</sup> *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* by Robert J. Sampson published by The University of Chicago Press in 2012.

Annually, Safe & Sound collects outputs on activity, including door contacts (residents met at their home), events and meetings, block clubs, clean-ups, and many more. These outputs are good indicators of neighborhood activity, but in line with Safe & Sound’s strategic focus on data-driven decision-making, it was important that the organization evaluate its strategy on a deeper level.

Safe & Sound contracted with Dr. Michael Levas to conduct an extensive evaluation of the organization’s primary activities over the first two years of its new structure. Dr. Levas, researcher Mark Nimmer, and their team from the Medical College of Wisconsin, have evaluated programs such as Children’s Hospital’s Project Ujima and are well-versed in environmental impacts on trauma.

Safe & Sound was primarily interested in evaluating its impact on collective efficacy, as the strategy is designed to specifically improve resident engagement, cohesiveness and willingness to intervene. However, the organization included secondary findings in the evaluation to deepen its understanding of the relationship between its strategies and measures of calls for service and crime rates. Therefore, the evaluation aimed to answer the following four questions:

*Primary Question*

1. Are Safe & Sound’s community outreach efforts associated with improvement in neighborhood collective efficacy?

*Secondary Questions*

2. Is the presence of Safe & Sound associated with improved correlation between gunshot reports and ShotSpotter technology?
3. Is the presence of Safe & Sound associated with a decrease in disorder crime?
4. Is the presence of Safe & Sound associated with a decrease in violent crime?

The research methodology is outlined at the end of this summary.

***Target and Control Neighborhoods***

Safe & Sound focuses its efforts in ten Milwaukee neighborhoods selected for several reasons but common among them are high crime rates. Safe & Sound expanded to serve MPD District Four in 2016, so that district was not included in the evaluation. The intervention neighborhoods and their associated controls are as follows:

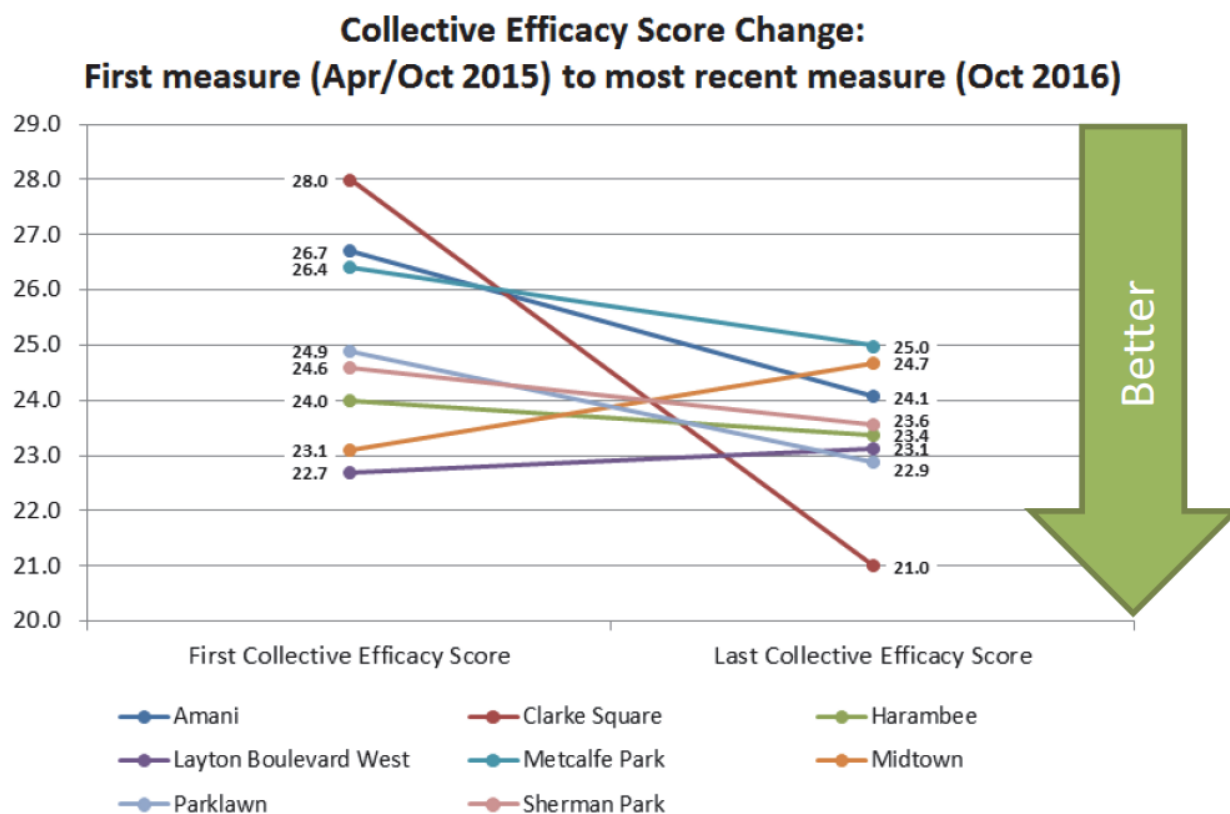
<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>Police District</b>
Layton Boulevard West/Clarke Square	Kosciusko	2
Midtown/Metcalf Park	Concordia	3
Amani/Harambee	Borchert Field	5
Parklawn/Sherman Park	Hampton Heights	7

## Question 1: Collective Efficacy

*Are Safe & Sound's Community Outreach Efforts Associated with Improvement in Neighborhood Collective Efficacy?*

The first and primary question the evaluation set out to answer was related to collective efficacy scores in the eight neighborhoods Safe & Sound served through 2015 and 2016. Safe & Sound staff conducted 200 resident surveys per neighborhood annually—one hundred in April and October. The surveys are a validated tool used by the Chicago research team whose work resulted in the body of research on collective efficacy.

Due to limited staffing in 2015, the first surveys of Clarke Square and Layton Boulevard West residents were conducted in October of 2015; the rest began in April 2015. Residents are at the heart of Safe & Sound's work, and these scores represent the feedback of more than 3,000 residents over two years.



As demonstrated on the chart above, the overall collective efficacy values improved in all but two intervention neighborhoods (Midtown and Layton Boulevard West). The change in Layton Boulevard West was small and could be attributed to the fact that there was one fewer round of surveys because of the late start, which might also provide some explanation for the dramatic improvement in Clarke Square's scores. Midtown is the only neighborhood that did not have an anchor agency partner and demonstrated the largest decline in collective efficacy. This may suggest that having an anchor program within the target neighborhood enhances Safe & Sound's ability to impact collective efficacy.

The researchers tested which Safe & Sound activities had statistically significant relationships to the scores. A key finding of this research is that **the number of block club meetings showed the most association with changes in collective efficacy scores**, with each block club meeting attended accounting for an improvement in score of 0.7. This finding is consistent with Safe & Sound’s experience that regular interaction among the same group of people lead to significant changes in a neighborhood culture.

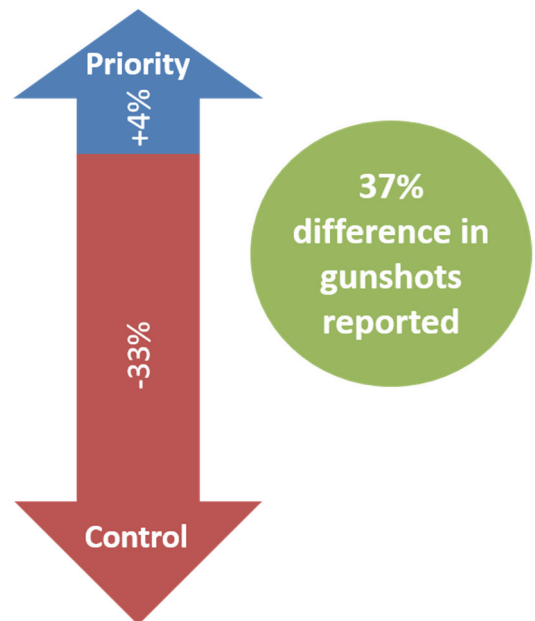


## Question 2: Rates of Calls for Service

*Is the Presence of Safe & Sound Associated with Improved Correlation Between Gunshot Reports and ShotSpotter Technology?*

The researchers investigated three secondary questions, including calls for service and crime rates, which should be impacted by changing rates of collective efficacy. The Milwaukee Police Department utilizes ShotSpotter technology, a gunshot location system that uses an array of GPS enabled acoustic sensors to detect and geo locate incidents of outdoor audible gunfire. By comparing ShotSpotter to calls for service reporting gunfire, the evaluation tested the hypothesis that calls for service would increase as residents are more engaged in crime prevention.

There were significant limitations to the data available, and only one neighborhood could sufficiently be tested against a control. The intervention neighborhood realized a 4% increase compared to the control neighborhood’s decrease of 33%. This suggests that the presence of Safe & Sound may have negated a net decrease in concordance between shots reported and ShotSpotter that was seen in control neighborhoods, in this example by 37%.



## Question 3: Disorder Crime Rates

### *Is the Presence of Safe & Sound Associated with Decrease in Disorder Crimes?*

Research holds that crime is impacted by levels of collective efficacy, as such the researchers sought to understand whether decreases in disorder and violent (question 4) crime rates were impacted by Safe & Sound's strategy. Knowing that an immediate impact was unlikely, this analysis provided an early glimpse of the neighborhood trends.

The chart below shows that compared to controls, disorder crime was lower in four of the eight neighborhoods, with Amani showing the most significant decrease. Post-intervention improvement in disorder crime occurred in neighborhoods with the most dramatic improvement in collective efficacy.

### *The Pre/Post Difference in Slope Between the Intervention and Control Neighborhoods of X Disorder Crimes per 1000 Residents Using Average Calendar Year Pre/Post Intervention Crime Rates*

Police District	Intervention	Control	Difference*
5	Amani	Borchert Field	-1.95
5	Harambee	Borchert Field	-1.38
2	Clarke Square	Kosciusko	-0.53
2	Layton Boulevard West	Kosciusko	0.50
3	Metcalfe Park	Concordia	1.52
3	Midtown	Concordia	-0.28
7	Parklawn	Hampton Heights	1.60
7	Sherman Park	Hampton Heights	0.83

\*These trends held true using more robust regression methodology.

There is promising evidence suggesting that certain intervention neighborhoods have improved their rates of disorder crime compared to their controls. Based on the regression analyses put forth above, **issue based events and general events are associated with an impact on disorder crime**. Issue based events included safety task force events, block parties, community events, and general events includes issue based events and other events like clean-ups, block club events, etc. The effect of issue based events on disorder crime was so strong it made general events a statistically significant activity.

### *Future Directions/Recommendation*

To improve future evaluation of the impact that Safe & Sound has on disorder crime, the researchers suggest:

1. Safe & Sound should attempt to mimic unique partnerships and interventions present in District Five in their other intervention areas.
2. Safe & Sound should attempt to replicate issue-based and general events to improve disorder crime rates.



## Question 4: Violent Crime Rates

### *Is the Presence of Safe & Sound Associated with Decrease in Violent Crimes?*

In 2015, violent crime trends increased across the country, including here in Milwaukee. While Safe & Sound's interventions ultimately aim to reduce violence and crime, there are many factors that influence crime, and violence in particular. The evaluation set out to determine if there is an association between Safe & Sound's work on collective efficacy and violent crime rates. Again, suspecting a lag effect and understanding the multiple factors that contribute to violent crime, the early results are encouraging.

#### *The Pre/Post Difference in Slope Between the Intervention and Control Neighborhoods of X Violent Crimes per 1000 Residents Using Average Calendar Year Pre/Post Intervention Crime Rates*

Police District	Intervention	Control	Difference*
5	Amani	Borchert Field	-0.31
5	Harambee	Borchert Field	-0.45
2	Clarke Square	Kosciusko	-0.27
2	Layton Boulevard West	Kosciusko	-0.04
3	Metcalfe Park	Concordia	0.12
3	Midtown	Concordia	-0.62
7	Parklawn	Hampton Heights	0.60
7	Sherman Park	Hampton Heights	0.04

\*These trends held true using more robust regression methodology.

Compared to the control neighborhoods, five of the eight intervention neighborhoods showed net improvement in change in violent crime. As was the case with disorder crimes, **the number of issue based events showed the most association with improvement in violent crime rates**. It is noteworthy that in August of 2016, an officer-involved shooting led to significant unrest and violence in the Sherman Park neighborhood, which is reflected in the table above.

#### *A Word about District Five*

**In MPD District Five, both interventions and the control neighborhood experienced decreases in crime. As such, it is apparent that something positive is happening within the police district.** This is especially encouraging considering that MPD District Five is in the 53206 zip code, which has been nationally recognized for its extraordinary rates of poverty and incarceration. Amani showed the most significant decreases in disorder crime. The results related to violent crime were similarly encouraging, with net decreases in violent crime in Amani and its control, Brochert Field, and Harambee trended better than the city as a whole. Interestingly, Safe & Sound's District Five organizing team is the only team that was in place in early 2015 when the intervention started, and did not experience any personnel turnover during the two years that were evaluated.

## Conclusion

Commissioning an independent evaluation of Safe & Sound's strategy after restructuring was an important step in ensuring our work is data-driven and research-informed. Safe & Sound responded to the changing needs of the community by restructuring its programming in 2015, and by evaluating that new strategy and adjusting as necessary, **Safe & Sound remains on the cutting edge of continual process improvement.**

### **The evaluation's key findings are encouraging:**

1. The overall collective efficacy values improved in all but two intervention neighborhoods.
2. Having an anchor program within the target neighborhood may enhance Safe & Sound's ability to impact collective efficacy.
3. Block clubs as an intervention were most associated with improvement in collective efficacy scores.
4. The presence of Safe & Sound, while not increasing the concordance between shots reported and ShotSpotter overall, may have negated a net decrease in concordance that was seen in control neighborhoods.
5. Post-intervention improvement in disorder crime occurred in neighborhoods with the most dramatic improvement in collective efficacy and despite increased frequency in a priori negative police-community events.
6. Police District Five shows the most dramatic decrease in disorder crime AND violent crime.
7. Four of the intervention neighborhoods showed improvement in rate of change in disorder crime compared to control neighborhoods.
8. The number of issue based events and general events held were associated with the most improvement in disorder crime rates.
9. Five of the intervention neighborhoods showed improvement in rate of change in violent crime compared to control neighborhoods.
10. The number of issue based events held showed the most association with improvement in violent crime rates.

### ***What has Safe & Sound learned?***

District Five, the only district in which Safe & Sound had a team from the start and consistently throughout the two years, showed significant results, not just in collective efficacy, but also in crime trends. An important factor in this success is the high level of collaboration and place-based efforts that have taken hold in Amani and Harambee. Safe & Sound has long postured that our efforts are most successful when building on strong, collaborative partnerships, and the evaluation's findings emphasize this theory.

Additionally, the significance of block clubs and issue based events, as well as general events, was underscored in their impact on collective efficacy and crime rates. Safe & Sound is committed to working with residents on those particular activities. For instance, as exhibited in Midtown, the importance of a community-based partnership is evident, and Safe & Sound expanded the boundaries of the neighborhood as a result of the findings.

Not every nonprofit has the opportunity to structure and evaluate its programming based on research, and Safe & Sound is fortunate to be in a position to do so. The findings of this evaluation are already being utilized to ensure Safe & Sound's strategy is responsive to the needs of the community, putting residents and youth at the center of any strategy, and the organization is developing plans for future evaluations.

# Research Questions and Methodology

As there are many facets to both programming of Safe & Sound and potential community level factors the research team utilized a quasi-experimental design, which uses several different types of data analysis in order to best determine the impact of Safe & Sound. All analyses were performed and reviewed in conjunction with the Medical College of Wisconsin's biostatistics department.

## *Statistical Process Control Methodology (QI methodology)*

In order to evaluate neighborhood level patterns in changes in rates of violent crime, disorder crime, and the correlation between shots reported and ShotSpotter technology, monthly MPD data were evaluated using statistical process control charts. This method was used to evaluate specifically whether Safe & Sound involvement was 1) associated with improved correlation between reported gunshots and shots identified by ShotSpotter technology, 2) reduction in the amount of violent crimes committed, and 3) reduction in the amount of disorder crimes committed. In order to fully recognize patterns, data points were plotted for two years prior to intervention and for two years following intervention. In some cases, it was necessary to further compare summer and winter seasons due to seasonality in both crime rates and gunshots reported.

## *Pre-Post Methodology*

Pre-Post methodology was utilized to help evaluate collective efficacy changes over time and to explore differences in rates of disorder and crime data.

## *Differences-In-Differences Methodology*

Differences-in-differences analysis was particularly used to evaluate the relationship between Safe & Sound and disorder and violent crime rates. Using standardized rates of criminal data, it is possible to account for potential changes in rates over time and differences in rates across compared neighborhoods. Differences-in-differences methodology was also used to evaluate the relative impact that Safe & Sound programming had on the correlation between ShotsSpotter and shots being reported specifically in the intervention and control neighborhoods with the most reliable data.

## *Interrupted Time Series Methodology*

We used an autoregressive integrated average (ARIMA) model to evaluate the relationship between Safe & Sound and both disorder and violent crime rates.

## *Regression Model Methodology*

Linear mixed models with a random neighborhood effect and first order autocorrelation to account for over time dependence were used to model disorder crime rate, violent crime rate, and collective efficacy (for intervention group only). Crime rates were predicted on group (intervention vs control), time, faith based organizations, and month (seasonality). Collective efficacy was predicted using time and month (faith based organizations were considered, but were not significant in any model).

## OUR MISSION

We unite residents, youth, law enforcement, and community resources to build safe and empowered neighborhoods.



[safesound.org](https://safesound.org)