

Expanding and investing in evidence-based programs, not surveillance, will make Detroit safer

Numerous studies and reports have found that ShotSpotter does not reduce gun violence in cities where it has been used, and the same is true for Detroit. However, we have many programs, with proven track records of success, that can take its place, most of which Detroit is already providing. Some of these programs include: youth summer programs, community violence intervention (CVI), and the mental health co-responder program.¹ Rather than renewing ShotSpotter's \$2 million contract, Detroit should double down on these programs and expand their funding.²

Youth Summer Programs

One alternative would be to dedicate more funding to the Occupy the Summer Youth and Grow Detroit's Young Talent (GDYT) programs. These programs seek to address increases in crime rates and economic uncertainty for youth and have documented proof of their effectiveness.³ For example, in 2006, a nationwide study of cities found that cities who adopted midnight basketball programs experienced an estimated 5% decline in property crimes compared to cities that did not.⁴ There is also substantial evidence supporting investing in Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP), like GDYT, to tackle a range of social issues. SYEPs have been successful across the country in reducing the number of arrests and convictions of young people.⁵ For example, an analysis of New York City's SYEP estimated a 17 percent decrease in the chance a program participant was arrested.⁶ Similar findings have been observed in Cleveland's and Chicago's SYEPs, with the reductions in illegal and violent behavior persisting more than a year out from participating in the program.⁷ In addition, SYEPs better prepare young people for college and careers, offer income support through paid work, and improve school attendance and educational outcomes.⁸ Last year, GDYT connected over 8,000 young people to employers.⁹ Even a fraction of the proposed budget for ShotSpotter could employ hundreds of young people in Detroit as well as greatly expand recreational opportunities for Detroit's youth year-round.

CVI

The second alternative to ShotSpotter would be to expand the funding for Detroit's Community Violence Intervention program, ShotStopper. CVI has had a short but successful history in Detroit. In 2024, only a year after its implementation, all six ShotStopper communities out-performed the citywide average

reduction in violent crime by as much as 48 percentage points.¹⁰ Cities across the country have also seen success in curtailing violent crime with CVI programs. An analysis of a similar program in Chicago, Choose to Change, found that participating in the program reduced the likelihood of a youth being arrested for violent crime by 39%, and this effect persisted for nearly 3 years.¹¹ Expanding the program's budget could support additional ShotStopper Organizations, particularly in West Detroit neighborhoods that aren't already serviced.¹²

Co-Responder Program

A third alternative to using ShotSpotter's community surveillance technology is to invest and expand upon Detroit's co-responder program. Since 2022, the Detroit Police Department (DPD) has utilized this program to direct crisis-trained officers and behavioral specialists from Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network (DWIHN) to mental health calls.¹³ These programs have proven track records, where they are implemented, of lowering involuntary psychiatric detentions and reducing mental health related 911 calls. For instance, a multi-year evaluation of the co-responder program in San Mateo County found that the program resulted in 16% and 17% reductions in involuntary psychiatric detentions and mental health-focused 911 calls, respectively.¹⁴ The program's success resulted from giving mental health clinicians the ability to directly connect people who are undergoing a mental health crisis with the services they need rather than forcing them to interact with the legal system. In addition, the clinicians were able to set up follow-up calls in the days after an interaction, establishing a continuity of care. And with expanded funding, Detroit's co-responder program doesn't need to be run through DPD. Some cities, like Atlanta, have placed mental health call responses in the hands of a non-profit with a separate non-emergency line. Durham, North Carolina, established a separate city agency to respond to these calls, the HEART (Holistic Empathetic Assistance Response Team) Program.¹⁵ Detroit is already thinking of doing something similar. In August 2025, a pilot program began with DWIHN and DPD to directly transfer nonviolent mental health calls from 911 to behavioral health professionals. The first month of the pilot resulted in 250 calls transferred to the DWIHN Crisis Call Center.¹⁶ In 2026, the co-responder program operated on a budget of less than \$190,000; increasing the budget by adding even a quarter of the proposed budget for ShotSpotter could not only expand the operations of the program but could facilitate its development into something with even greater positive impact.

¹ "Mayor's Initiatives and Programs," City of Detroit, accessed June 17, 2026, <https://detroitmi.gov/government/mayors-office/mayors-initiatives-and-programs>.

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- ³ “FAQs,” Occupy the Summer, accessed June 17, 2026, <https://ots.detroitmi.gov/faqs>; “Detroit youth can now register for summer jobs as Mayor Sheffield announces opening of the 2026 GDYT Application Portal,” City of Detroit, March 13, 2026, <https://detroitmi.gov/news/detroit-youth-can-now-register-summer-jobs-mayor-sheffield-announces-opening-2026-gdyt-application>.
- ⁴ Douglas Hartmann and Brooks Depro, “Rethinking Sports-Based Community Crime Prevention: A Preliminary Analysis of the Relationship Between Midnight Basketball and Urban Crime Rates,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 30, no. 2 (2006): 190, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723506286863>.
- ⁵ “Summer Youth Employment Programs for Violence Prevention,” Everytown, May 12, 2023, <https://everytownresearch.org/report/summer-youth-employment-programs/>.
- ⁶ Judd B. Kessler, Sarah Tahamont, Alexander M. Gelber, and Adam Isen, “The Effects of Youth Employment on Crime: Evidence From New York City Lotteries,” Working Paper, no. 28373, (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2021), 13, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28373/w28373.pdf.
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- ⁸ Everytown.
- ⁹ “About,” Grow Detroit’s Young Talent, accessed June 18, 2026, <https://gdyt.org/about>.
- ¹⁰ “After one year of Detroit Community Violence Initiative: All 6 CVI Zones record historic reductions in violent crime of 37%-83% in last quarter,” City of Detroit, December 2, 2024, <https://detroitmi.gov/news/after-one-year-detroit-community-violence-initiative-all-6-cvi-zones-record-historic-reductions>.
- ¹¹ Nour Abdul-Razzak, Brandon Domash, Kelly Hallberg, and Cristobal Pinto Poehls, “Longer-term Impacts of a Youth Behavioral Science Intervention: Experimental Evidence from Chicago,” University of Chicago Crime Lab (2025): 23, <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5303292>.
- ¹² “Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Adopted Budget,” City of Detroit, accessed June 18, 2026, <https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2025-06/FY2026%20Adopted%20Budget.pdf>.
- ¹³ Briana Rice, “Detroit police adding more crisis trained officers to respond to mental health calls,” *Michigan Public*, December 14, 2022, <https://www.michiganpublic.org/public-safety/2022-12-14/detroit-police-adding-more-crisis-trained-officers-to-respond-to-mental-health-calls>.
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