



Milwaukee police did something different to tackle crime in the city — they focused on just 2.3 square miles of it

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(Photo: Ashley Luthern / Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)

When the Milwaukee Police Department was chosen for a federal program to help lower crime, officials here did something different.

Instead of launching a citywide effort, Milwaukee went small.

The Police Department, the FBI and other federal partners focused on 2.3 square miles on the north side known as the Center Street Corridor.

Police statistics had shown 10% of all violent crime in the city occurred in that area.

The results in the first nine months in 2016 were dramatic — a 28% drop in nonfatal shootings in the corridor — and drew officials from the U.S. Department of Justice and New Orleans to Milwaukee on Wednesday to learn more.

Police Chief Edward Flynn admitted the department had "lost some ground in 2017," as homicides and shootings ticked up from last year, though still remained lower than in 2015.

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In the span of a few weeks this past summer, [16-year-old Emani Robinson was shot and killed \(/story/news/crime/2017/07/27/2-charged-connection-fatal-shooting-16-year-old-emani-robinson/518103001/\)](/story/news/crime/2017/07/27/2-charged-connection-fatal-shooting-16-year-old-emani-robinson/518103001/) outside a corner store and two girls, ages 5 and 9, were wounded [in a quadruple shooting \(/story/news/local/milwaukee/2017/07/19/police-searching-suspects-north-side-shooting-wounded-4/491830001/\)](/story/news/local/milwaukee/2017/07/19/police-searching-suspects-north-side-shooting-wounded-4/491830001/).



People join hands in prayer in a circle before they begin a walk through the neighborhood. A community cleanup and prayer walk were held at N. 39th St. and W. Center St. in Milwaukee on July 8, 2017, in honor of 16-year-old Emani Robinson who was shot and killed. (Photo: Michael Sears / Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)

Flynn said after the initial success in 2016, the department backed off too soon and crime began to re-emerge in the targeted area. Still, New Orleans Deputy Chief Paul Noel told reporters he sees promise in the strategy and his department is implementing it.

The federal program, known as the Public Safety Partnership, brought a local law enforcement priority to the forefront of the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the U.S. Marshals and U.S. Attorney's Office.

It got those agencies "to buy in specifically to help the problems of Milwaukee," said Terrance Gainer, who serves as a liaison from the federal government on the project.

In Milwaukee, the team approach focuses on identifying who is involved in shootings, robberies and other violence in the area and targeting those people for arrest and prosecution.

As part of the process, investigators use an algorithm that examines the amount of violence and how recently it has occurred, Flynn said.

In the 20 months since the initiative began, police and federal partners have conducted [warrant sweeps](http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/crime/2017/07/26/police-arrest-dozens-seize-thousands-wednesday-northside-operation/513767001/) ([/story/news/crime/2017/07/26/police-arrest-dozens-seize-thousands-wednesday-northside-operation/513767001/](http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/crime/2017/07/26/police-arrest-dozens-seize-thousands-wednesday-northside-operation/513767001/)), added Milwaukee homicide suspects to the [FBI's most wanted list](http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/crime/2017/01/15/milwaukee-double-homicide-suspect-fbis-most-wanted-list-caught-el-paso/96615238/) ([/story/news/crime/2017/01/15/milwaukee-double-homicide-suspect-fbis-most-wanted-list-caught-el-paso/96615238/](http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/crime/2017/01/15/milwaukee-double-homicide-suspect-fbis-most-wanted-list-caught-el-paso/96615238/)) and strengthened ballistics information-sharing to quickly link guns to crime scenes.

ARCHIVE: [Ballistic technology gives police quick leads on gun crimes](http://archive.jsonline.com/news/crime/ballistics-technology-gives-police-quick-leads-on-gun-crimes-b99578697z1-328279321.html) (<http://archive.jsonline.com/news/crime/ballistics-technology-gives-police-quick-leads-on-gun-crimes-b99578697z1-328279321.html>)

Every six weeks, representatives from the agencies sit down for a CompStat meeting, where they scrutinize crime statistics and see if their efforts are making a difference.

The Center Street Corridor stretches from about N. 16th St. to N. 51st St. and is bordered by Burleigh St. to the north and North Ave. to the south.

It's a small fraction of the city's 96 square miles and includes parts of three police districts: 3, 5 and 7. It also has 39% poverty and 16% unemployment.

So far this year, 17 homicides have been reported in the corridor, compared to 14 at the same time last year. Nonfatal shootings also have risen from last year, from 86 to 101.

Cities in the federal program receive customized help to focus on specific crime problems and share best practices from around the country.

Under the program, police in Wilmington, Del., created a new homicide unit and solved a higher percentage of cases. In Detroit, authorities saw a 35% drop in domestic violence-related homicides after targeted efforts.

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"The problems and challenges of many of our central cities are very, very similar and not necessarily unique to Milwaukee," Flynn said. "There are variations of the same problem."

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