



NATIONAL NETWORK FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Chicago Steps Up Violence Reduction Strategy with Second Call-In

By Sibylle von Ulmenstein
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On February 24, Chicago held its second gang violence notification meeting in District 11 (East and West Garfield Park) with law enforcement and community representatives speaking “to and through” 40 gang-involved parolees from the area to get the message out to gang members that gun violence must stop.

Chicago Superintendent Jody Weis told the men the reason city, state and federal enforcement agencies were putting the spotlight on District 11 was because the community had asked them to do so. “The police are absolutely powerless unless the community wants us to be here. And they do ... If you take nothing away from here tonight, nothing, simply say [to your associates] 'drop the guns, stop killing people. If you don't there will be consequences to pay.'”

Addressing some of the misunderstandings that arose after Chicago's first call-in in August 2010, Weis said that a murder by a gang member would not result in all other group members being prosecuted for the same murder. “But what we will do, and this is a promise, we will look at that group through the eyes of state and federal law ... and use every tool there is to go after the whole gang.” Weis added: “We are doing something different here tonight. We are telling you our game plan ahead of time. We are telling you what the CPD will do, the state will do and the feds will do. All you have to do is take the message back to your guys.”

“We don't want to put 1,000 people in prison. We don't want to do none of that. But we have to stop the killing and we need you to make that happen,” Weis urged the men.

Deputy Superintendent Ernest Brown told the group that nothing positive could happen in the neighborhood until everyone put down their guns. “Many of you guys would do something different if there were jobs here in the community. But those jobs will never come unless we first stop the violence.”

State and U.S. Attorneys set out in detail the exact sanctions future violent and gun-related acts would incur and stressed that any gang-related killing or shooting in District 11 would be given immediate priority by their offices and prosecuted to the harshest extent possible.

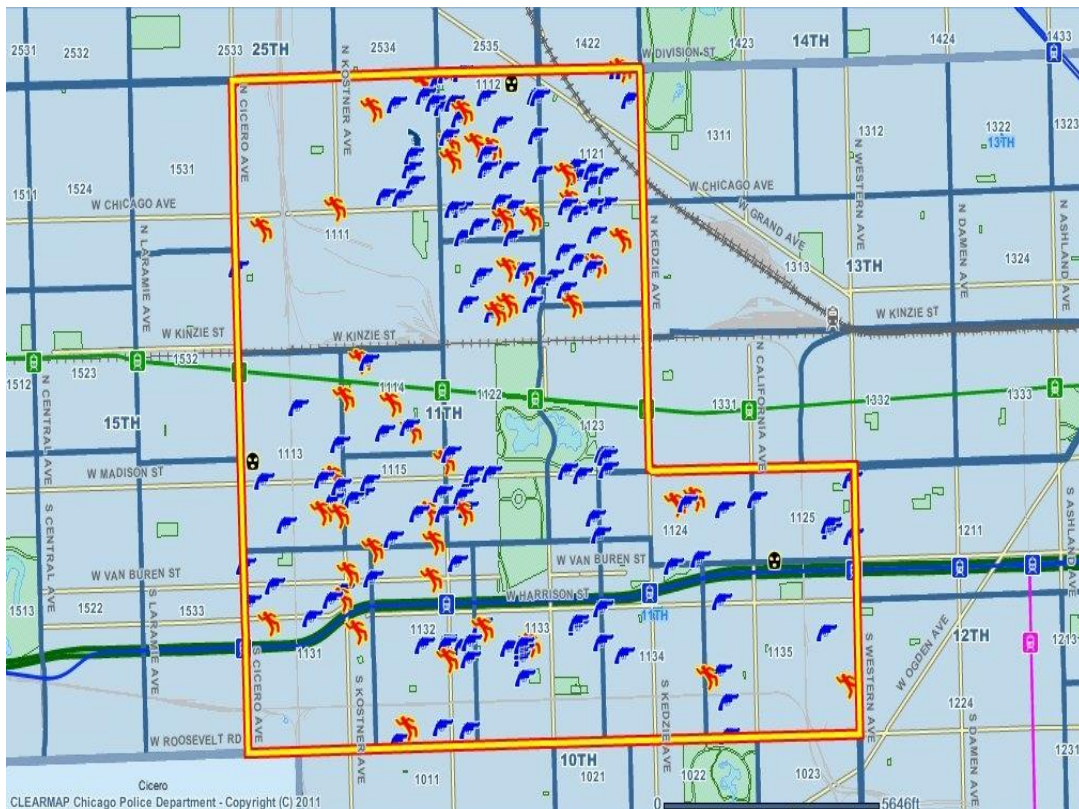
A representative from A Safe Haven Foundation, which hosted the meeting at its headquarters in the neighborhood, told the men about the services the Foundation can provide and stressed that all they needed was to call one single phone number to be connected to these services if they chose to turn their lives around.

Recalling the pain of losing loved ones to gun violence in the district, representatives of the community moved gang members in attendance to spontaneous applause when they called on them to put down the guns, support their children and loved ones, and take their rightful place in the community instead of going to prison or dying over senseless disputes.

"All our black men are in jail. The community doesn't want that. We cannot stand that... You have children. They are watching you. Don't let somebody else be their mentor," a neighborhood resident urged the gang members. "I had to bury my grandson and my nephew. This is not the order of life."

The law enforcement-community partnership leading Chicago's Violence Reduction Strategy (VRS) held its first gang call-in in District 11 in August 2010. This meeting was followed by two separate enforcement actions. The first led to the arrests of 60 members of the Black Souls, [pinpointed using social network analysis](#), after one of its members was arrested for the first gang-involved murder following the call-in.

The second action was directed at a faction of the Traveling Vice Lords, identified as the most violent group in District 11. Since the VRS partnership began call-ins last year, [District 11 has experienced a 40 percent drop in homicides, according to the Chicago Police Department](#). It is hopeful that this latest notification of offenders will lead to further violence reductions in the area.



District 11 had 49 homicides and 146 shootings in 2010, but there have been clear signs of a turnaround since CVRS held its first call-in in the district in August 2010.