



October 7, 2024

The Honorable Sheng Thao
Mayor, City of Oakland

The Honorable Nikki Fortunato Bas
Council President, City of Oakland

The Honorable Rebecca Kaplan
Council Member, City of Oakland

The Honorable Dan Kalb
Council Member, City of Oakland

The Honorable Carroll Fife
Council Member, City of Oakland

The Honorable Janani Ramachandran
Council Member, City of Oakland

The Honorable Noel Gallo
Council Member, City of Oakland

The Honorable Kevin Jenkins
Council Member, City of Oakland

The Honorable Treva Reid
Council Member, City of Oakland

Chief Floyd Mitchell
Chief of Police, City of Oakland

Dear Mayor Thao, Council President Bas, Council Member Kaplan, Kalb, Fife, Ramachandran, Gallo, Jenkins, Reid, and Chief Mitchell:

I write in advance of the October 8, 2024 Oakland (“Oakland” or the “City”) City Council Committee on Public Safety (“PSC”) meeting during which PSC is scheduled to address the topic of renewing SoundThinking’s contract to deploy ShotSpotter in the City.

As you may be aware, the contract with Oakland expired on June 30, 2024. Since then, SoundThinking has been providing continued ShotSpotter coverage to Oakland without the protections that a contract would guarantee. Our reason for doing so is simple: SoundThinking has been a valued partner of Oakland since 2006, and we are aware of how critical ShotSpotter has been in helping the Oakland Police Department (“OPD”) and first responders in their fight to mitigate the effects of gun violence. While SoundThinking would have been fully justified in suspending ShotSpotter coverage upon the expiration of our prior contract, we have continued to provide Oakland with coverage because we are committed to the City, its residents, and the strong relationship that we have forged with OPD over the past nearly two decades.

As the City Council and PSC prepare to discuss ShotSpotter’s future in Oakland, we believe it is imperative to highlight how ShotSpotter has benefited the City since first being deployed nearly 20 years ago. Simply stated, throughout this period, independent analysis, media reports, statements by officials, and feedback from Oakland residents confirm the following:

- 1) ShotSpotter helps **save lives**;

- 2) **ShotSpotter enables faster and a more comprehensive response to criminal gunfire** (less than 10% of which is reported by 911);
- 3) ShotSpotter assists in **collecting evidence, apprehending criminals, and recovering illegal guns**;
- 4) ShotSpotter is a **critical foundation that enables Operation Ceasefire**; and
- 5) ShotSpotter **saves Oakland money**.

The value that ShotSpotter has delivered to Oaklanders is why public officials, business leaders, and residents are so vocal in their support for keeping the technology in the City. We have included some notable examples in Exhibit 1.

A similar sentiment is echoed by Oakland business leaders. On June 21, 2024, in response to reports of efforts to petition City Council to cut ShotSpotter funding, the leaders of Blue Shield of California, The Clorox Company, Kaiser Permanente, and PG&E—all headquartered in Oakland—authored a letter to the City Council in which they expressed, in no uncertain terms, that they were “troubled to learn that cutting the [ShotSpotter] service is being considered,” and conveyed that they “oppose that vehemently.” The letter is included as Exhibit 2.

One of the most compelling arguments that Oakland’s business leaders make in support of maintaining ShotSpotter is its support for another major crimefighting initiative: Operation Ceasefire. The letter correctly notes that ShotSpotter “is a key tool that helps Operation Ceasefire and its partners as they work to determine what and who is driving violence, and where. Losing the data on how much, where, and when gunfire occurs would substantially dilute Ceasefire’s intelligence-led intervention strategy.” The validity of this assertion is proven by Chief Mitchell and Assistant Chief Beere’s comments on the intelligence and information value that ShotSpotter provides.

The viewpoints that can—and should—not be ignored by City officials are those from Oakland residents themselves. Based on what we have heard, the desire to maintain ShotSpotter within Oakland is clear. Here is a sample of one of those powerful statements:

“I am a freelance breaking news videographer in Oakland. My police scanner is on 24/7. ShotSpotter saves lives. I listen to OPD respond to ShotSpotter activations & find victims, at least once a week. Unless there is a better technology to replace the system that Oakland can afford, we NEED the ShotSpotter system.” –A.B.

Additionally, we are aware of a July 17, 2024 letter from a coalition of local nonprofits that was addressed to the City Council. In Exhibit 3, SoundThinking refutes the most egregious false and misleading claims made about ShotSpotter in that letter.

Finally, we would very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss all these issues and address any outstanding questions you may have about ShotSpotter. We look forward to finalizing a new contract with Oakland as an important next step in continuing to work with OPD and City officials to do everything possible to help address gun violence and keep Oaklanders safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RAC', written in a cursive style.

Ralph A. Clark
President and CEO
SoundThinking, Inc.

EXHIBIT 1

Statements by Oakland Public Officials About ShotSpotter

- On November 7, 2023, a suspect shot at an OPD sergeant who was on his way to work. Commenting on the incident, Mayor Thao, [stated](#), “ShotSpotter went off, so I can tell you that. And that’s a utility that we use here it [*sic*] the city of Oakland, to have our officers show up when there are gunshots that are fired. So, we are seeing that technology is working.”
- During a special concurrent meeting of the Oakland Redevelopment Agency and City Council held on June 12, 2024, Chief Mitchell [said](#), “In regards to ShotSpotter, this is an investigative tool. And as a department, we’re reducing staffing because our goal is to use the technology as a force multiplier. ShotSpotter has been a very good tool for us in our criminal investigations, especially when it comes to aggravated assaults in the use of a firearm. Just this past couple of weeks, we’ve had a couple of violent incidents in which the ShotSpotter information helps us identify where that victim may have been dumped versus where that person was shot...I would not recommend getting rid of it at this point in time.”
- During the same meeting, Assistant Chief of Police James Beere [added](#), “And in regards [*sic*] to ShotSpotter, there are no plans to get rid of ShotSpotter. It’s a very valuable tool. Unless I’m speaking out of turn, please correct me, but ShotSpotter is extremely important for the safety of the community as well as our officers that are working on the street. It’s a tool that although sometimes we may have problems or hurdles responding to crimes in progress, that actually gives us a large amount of intelligence, information with regards to the weapons being used and the locations where they’re going. And we use it all the time, it’s a very important tool, and there’s no plans to get rid of it.”

EXHIBIT 2

Letter from Leaders of Blue Shield of California, The Clorox Company, Kaiser Permanente, and PG&E Responding to Reports that ShotSpotter will not be Renewed in Oakland

It is important to recognize that there are [well-documented examples](#) of business leaders nationwide [relocating their companies](#) when they feel employee safety is jeopardized due to crime.

That is why it's significant to consider the letter's statement that "[w]e believe in the strongest of terms that [cancelling ShotSpotter] would be deeply unwise and would undermine recent progress that's been made to reduce violent crime". The letter also notes that "[b]etween 2020 and 2023, over 380 lives were saved because of ShotSpotter," and that "from 2022 to 2023, it led to 179 arrests and 139 guns recovered". In addition, it warns against "send[ing] us back to the dark ages where efforts to respond to gunfire, and potentially save the lives of gunshot victims, would go back to relying on citizen 911 calls."

Please find the full letter attached.

EXHIBIT 3

Executive Summary

No.	Claim	Response	Page
1	<i>“There is no evidence from any jurisdiction country that uses ShotSpotter, nor any evidence provided by OPD, that first aid is being rendered more often, or faster, due to ShotSpotter.”</i>	Incorrect	7
2	<i>“No data has been provided in any ShotSpotter jurisdiction that the rendering of first aid justifies the money spent.”</i>	Incorrect	9
3	<i>“ShotSpotter has not reduced gun violence in communities.”</i>	False	11
4	<i>“ShotSpotter does not help reduce other violent crimes.”</i>	False	11
5	<i>“ShotSpotter does not deter crime.”</i>	Incorrect	12
6	<i>“ShotSpotter has no impact on—or, due to over-dispatching, has slowed—police response time.”</i>	False	13
7	<i>“Implementing ShotSpotter has no significant impact on firearm-related arrest outcomes.”</i>	Incorrect	14
8	<i>“The recovery of guns does not lead to a commensurate increase in the rates of arrest.”</i>	False	16
9	<i>“The recovery of bullet casings does not lead to a commensurate increase in the rate of arrest.”</i>	False	20
10	<i>“ShotSpotter results in prosecutors dismissing charges at trial.”</i>	False	21
11	<i>“ShotSpotter leads to increased civil rights abuses and over policing of marginalized communities.”</i>	Incorrect	23
12	<i>“ShotSpotter alerts to false alarms (e.g., fireworks, automobiles backfiring, and construction noises) which diverts resources away from legitimate policing needs.”</i>	False	25
13	<i>“ShotSpotter’s accuracy rate is below the 90% requirement.”</i>	Incorrect	26
14	<i>“Many ShotSpotter alerts are from negligent discharge of a firearm, not a violent crime.”</i>	Ignores the point	26
15	<i>“ShotSpotter sends police to scenes where no evidence of a crime is found.”</i>	Incorrect	26
16	<i>“ShotSpotter results in less reporting of shots fired to 911.”</i>	False	27
17	<i>“No data has ever been provided to support ongoing use of ShotSpotter.”</i>	False	28
18	<i>“Many jurisdictions have declined to adopt the technology after pilots or have not to renewed upon expiration.”</i>	False and misleading	29

Claim #1: “There is no evidence from any jurisdiction country that uses ShotSpotter, nor any evidence provided by OPD, that first aid is being rendered more often, or faster, due to ShotSpotter.”

Response: Incorrect

Oakland government officials have stated the opposite. During an Oakland City Council Public Safety Committee meeting held on September 26, 2003, Deputy City Administrator Joe DeVries [noted](#), “the police department...they’ve been able to consistently show that ShotSpotter gets them to shooting victims faster.” This echoes the [statements](#) made by a City official during a 2022 town hall meeting in Oakland District 7:

“ShotSpotter is very effective. It allows officers to know where gunfire is coming from within seconds. This helps our officers get to victims within minutes and give them aid to increase their chances of survival. We recently expanded these in the city because it helps us know where we need to be by informing us on what areas are impacted the most by gun violence.”

According to a [report](#) produced by the Oakland Privacy Advisory Commission, in 2020 alone (i.e., just one of the 18 years that ShotSpotter has been deployed in the City), “OPD was able to provide and coordinate immediate emergency medical response to...101 surviving shooting victims,” after being alerted to their whereabouts by ShotSpotter technology. The same report goes on to state that “OPD personnel believe that several of these victims survived the shootings specifically because of the quick response subsequent medical attention, [and that] [i]n some instances, OPD and medical response occurred within less than two minutes of ShotSpotter activation.” One of the most well-known examples of this concerns retired police captain Ersie Joyner III, who was shot 22 times while filling up his car at a gas station. Joyner has publicly [stated](#) that he “believe[s] that the [ShotSpotter] gun detection technology employed by Oakland police was key to [his] survival,” since it allowed police officers to arrive at his precise location quickly and get him medical help.

In total, from 2020 through 2023, ShotSpotter directed OPD to 386 shooting victims for whom there was no corresponding 911 call made within 15 minutes or 1,000 feet of the corresponding ShotSpotter alert.

Local media has covered a litany of stories where a ShotSpotter alerted OPD to a shooting, and that upon arriving on scene, OPD found injured victims. Examples include:

- On August 23, 2024, “Officers [responded](#)...to the 1600 block of 83rd Avenue after activation of the city’s ShotSpotter gunfire detection system.” Once on scene, OPD discovered that “two people...were critically injured...and were [then] taken to area hospitals.”

- On August 12, 2024, “[a] ShotSpotter activation alerted Oakland PD of a shooting in the 1400 block of 13th Street...[where] [t]he responding officers said they [found](#) a victim who sustained a gunshot wound(s)...Paramedics arrived on the scene and transported the victim to the hospital.”
- On September 10, 2023, “[f]ollowing multiple ShotSpotter activations indicating gunfire on the 7500 block of International Boulevard...police responding to the area found a shooting victim...[who] was [transported](#) to the local hospital in stable condition.”

This impact is not exclusive to Oakland.

- During a Chicago City Council meeting, former Superintendent of Police David Brown [declared](#) that “over the last five years, 125 lives were saved at [ShotSpotter] alert locations. Gunshot detection technology saves lives.”
- In Cleveland, Mayor Justin Bibb [summarized](#) ShotSpotter’s role in saving lives, as follows: “the most important benefit of utilizing technology is saving lives—something that ShotSpotter has accomplished here in the City of Cleveland saving the lives of over a dozen gunshot wound victims, an overwhelming majority of which have been Black victims.”
- In Pennsylvania, “[t]he City of Pittsburgh [announced](#) data from 2019 and 2020...that shows the system was the only reporting mechanism to first responders for 13 shooting victims over the past two years.” The report further underscores the role played by ShotSpotter when it states that “[w]ithout the ShotSpotter notification, it is unknown when, if ever, first responders would have been notified [to the 13 victims] and given the opportunity to provide life saving [sic] care.”
- A similar outcome was [observed](#) in West Palm Beach, where “ShotSpotter gunshot detection technology was deployed...enabling responding offices to arrive fast enough to the scene that they could begin critical trauma medical care that made the difference in saving lives.”
- In Chicago, a ShotSpotter alert led to “officers Rhonda Ward and her partner Julius Givens [being] first on the scene,” where they found a 13-year-old boy “who was shot in the back and abdomen, and immediately put the boy in their squad car” to transport him to the hospital before EMTs were able to arrive. The boy, [survived](#), and the Chicago Police Department credited the officers’ actions—first triggered by a ShotSpotter alert.
- In Winston-Salem, there are several examples of ShotSpotter facilitating a more expedient response by first responders who, then, were able to more rapidly administer life-saving medical aid:

- First, an independent academic study authored by the Center for Crime Science and Violence Prevention at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville “identified several cases in which victims received faster medical care that according to medical professionals likely saved their lives.” More sobering is the acknowledgement that “in some of these cases only a ShotSpotter alert led police to detect a victim.”
- Additionally, a [report](#) authored by the Winston-Salem Police Department (“WSPD”) itself noted, “[i]n two instances, had the ShotSpotter system not alerted law enforcement to the shooting, the victims would most likely have died, since neither of these incidents were reported by citizen 911 calls. When officers responded to the ShotSpotter alerts, they were able to render aid and request EMS, which ensured both victims were transported to a local hospital, where the person was treated for (and survived) life-threatening injuries.”
- WSPD Captain Gauldin has [said](#) that “[w]hen we’re looking at saving somebody’s life or looking at getting to a victim quickly to render aid...[ShotSpotter]’s invaluable to us.” After just one year of being in operation, Captain Gauldin acknowledged that “in the time the program has been live...police have saved two lives thanks to information provided by ShotSpotter.” For that reason, she noted “[i]t’s expensive...[b]u if we’re taking guns off the streets and we’re saving lives, I think it’s a win-win for everybody.” Gauldin [noted](#) that in the three years since it has been deployed, ShotSpotter has directed WSPD to 27 gunshot victims who were able to receive medical aid as a result of the technology.
- In Sparks, Nevada, Lt. John Patton [remarked](#), “Before [we deployed ShotSpotter], somebody would call us and we’re driving around aimlessly not knowing exactly where to go and in those cases, maybe somebody might have been hurt and we’re looking in the wrong place.”
- Similar instances of ShotSpotter providing the first indication to law enforcement that a shooting occurred—allowing them to locate, and render aid to, gunshot victims—have occurred in other locations throughout the country, including [Columbia, South Carolina](#), [Toledo, Ohio](#), [West Palm Beach](#) and [Jacksonville](#), Florida and—according to a trauma surgeon at Cooper University Hospital who researches gun violence and its health impacts—[Camden, New Jersey](#).

Claim #2: “No data has been provided in any ShotSpotter jurisdiction that the rendering of first aid justifies the money spent.”

Response: Incorrect

This is a disturbing statement. First, it presupposes that there *is* a dollar value that can be attached to saving a life—a notion with which SoundThinking strongly disagrees. But, even if one does try to place a monetary value on human life, the line of attack has also been disproven.

The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (“NICJR”) [calculated](#) the cost of a fatal shooting in Oakland as \$3,191,722, although NICJR acknowledges that this “is a conservative estimate; the real cost is likely even higher.” For non-fatal shootings, the calculated cost is \$1,245,136 per incident. To understand the thoroughness of NICJR’s analysis, a description of the breadth of cost inputs they assessed is helpful:

“When someone is shot in Oakland, there is an immediate, multifaceted, and very expensive response for an array of government agencies. The Fire Department dispatches Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), government contracted ambulances respond, and several Oakland Police Department (OPD) units descend on the scene. Investigators from the Alameda County District Attorney’s Office also often arrive, and if the victim is declared dead on the scene, the Coroner is called. All of this is only for the shooting scene itself. For a surviving victim, there is also typically a hospitalization, which is frequently paid for by tax dollars. Rehabilitation follows in the case of serious injury, and victim compensation is generally provided. There is also often a lengthy investigation by OPD and the Alameda County District Attorney’s Office, who are sometimes joined by the US Attorney. A trial and long incarceration period frequently follow. When there are multiple victims and/or suspects, these efforts and costs multiply for a single shooting incident.”

NICJR’s report notes that “these are only some of the costs of each non-fatal shooting.” And, while the cost of shooting incidents is eye opening, the most jarring finding made by NICJR is the following:

“In the past three years [2020-2022], Oakland has averaged approximately 635 combined fatal and non-fatal shootings annually, which cost taxpayers almost \$1,014,518,750 per year. If Oakland could reduce its gun violence rate by just 20%, that could result in government savings of about \$202,903,750 per year.”

The scale of these figures is almost unimaginable, but the conclusion is clear: over three years, gun violence cost Oakland taxpayers over \$1 billion, or approximately \$333 million per year. These dollars were not spent on providing taxpayer services such as better schools, social service programs for the vulnerable, or infrastructure and public works improvements for communities.

For that reason, the second excerpted sentence above is particularly impactful, as it speaks to the opportunity Oakland could gain by even marginally reducing gun violence. Thus, the takeaway is apparent: *any* investment that Oakland officials can make in a program that has proven success in either saving the lives of gunshot victims and/or reducing the likelihood that gun violence occurs is justified. This report has already proven that ShotSpotter increases the likelihood that a gunshot victim will receive the timely medical aid needed to survive a shooting. It has also shown how the technology aids officials in arresting and prosecuting violent criminals and taking guns off the street, both of which reduce the likelihood of future shootings and the associated costs.

Yet, what is critically important to know is that, under the now-expired contract, ShotSpotter delivered these benefits to Oakland at a cost of only \$800,000 per year. Contextualizing this figure is key. At \$800,000 per year, if ShotSpotter prevented *just one* non-fatal shooting, it would represent a 156% return on investment. If it prevented *just one* fatal shooting, the return would balloon to 399%. It is impossible for anyone to credibly claim that ShotSpotter has not prevented, at minimum, one non-fatal and/or fatal shooting per year. Therefore, it is unreasonable to claim that ShotSpotter is not well worth its cost, even ignoring the reality we all know is true: that it is impossible to put a value on a life saved.

Claim #3: "ShotSpotter has not reduced gun violence in communities."

Response: False

The examples of ShotSpotter leading to statistically significant decreases in gun violence are numerous, but some of the most salient examples include:

- In [Cincinnati](#), in areas of the city where ShotSpotter devices are located, "reports for shots fired have decreased by approximately 45%...controlling for before/after-effects as well as control sites, and that this finding is significant."
- In Jacksonville, Florida, WOKV-FM [reported](#) on a decrease in shootings in high crime areas which law enforcement attributes to the use of ShotSpotter. According to police ShotSpotter alerts are down nearly 25% compared to the same time last year, while shootings in the city are down 8.6% and murders are down nearly 30%.

Claim #4: "ShotSpotter does not help reduce other violent crimes."

Response: False

ShotSpotter has proven its effectiveness in leading to reductions in other categories of violent crime. This is affirmed by independent academic studies and reports from law enforcement officials:

- The [NYU School of Law's Policing Project](#) partnered with the St. Louis County Police Department "to compare geographic areas with and without ShotSpotter [to] determine whether there was a change in relevant public safety outcomes due to its adoption." The Policing Project found that "[a]cross the eight beats with ShotSpotter, this accounts for around ten fewer assaults per month that can be attributed to ShotSpotter, or around a 30 percent decline in reported assaults."
- In Winston-Salem, within ShotSpotter's deployment zone, there was a 24% reduction in "aggravated assaults and homicides after ShotSpotter" implementation. This is particularly noteworthy given that "[b]y contrast the comparison area (and the remainder of Winston-Salem) display[ed] an initial growth in assaults...(+2%)" during the same period. Robberies also

decreased, with “the decline...[being] the greatest in the ShotSpotter area (-19%).” Similarly, “[c]harges for illegal carrying [of] firearms...were reduced by about 5% in the ShotSpotter area after the detection system became active, but increased by 17% in the comparison area.¹

- In New York, the New York Police Department (“NYPD”) has [noted](#) “that the simple omnipresence of the Officers responding to the ShotSpotter alert dissuades further crime in and of itself.” In their 2021 report highlighting “Efforts Over The Past Eight Years to Reduce Crime and Strengthen Ties with New Yorkers,” NYPD confirmed that “six of eight NYPD patrol boroughs have expanded overall index crime declines over the last eight-years...gains [that are] part of a long-term strategy that began in 2014...[in which] [t]echnology played a key role...[including] [a] ShotSpotter gunshot detection system that was installed around the city to give police officers a head start the moment shots were fired.”
- Within the first six months of deployment in Lancaster, California, Mayor R. Pex Parris stated that ShotSpotter [contributed to](#) crackdowns on illegal narcotics operations and gang-related activities. “I am proud to say that the deployment of ShotSpotter has been nothing short of exceptional,” said the Mayor. “This innovative technology has proven invaluable in our efforts to combat crime and ensure public safety,” he added.
- Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O’Hara has [stated](#) that the data provided by ShotSpotter has led to a 15% reduction in homicides year over year.

Claim #5: “ShotSpotter does not deter crime.”

Response: Incorrect

At least three municipalities have specifically noted ShotSpotter’s deterrence effect. Portland, Oregon, convened a Focused Intervention Team Community Oversight Group (“FITCOG”) to study the implementation of ShotSpotter. At the conclusion of its review, FITCOG [recommended](#) that the city “should invest in the Portland Police Bureau for the use and implementation of ShotSpotter technology as a focused deterrent tool as part of the overarching gun violence response strategy.”

In Forest Park, Georgia, when discussing the city’s deployment of ShotSpotter, Mayor Angelyne Butler [stated](#), “We...are keenly aware of how gun violence impacts our local community, including an overall reduction to a high quality of life due to fear experienced by residents...It is our hope that we are able to mitigate, prevent and deter senseless acts of violence that for too long have had devastating consequences for survivors, victims and families here in Georgia and across the nation.”

¹ The Impact of ShotSpotter Deployment in Winston-Salem, NC, Updated Results, 2024.

And, in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in a press briefing prior to ShotSpotter’s deployment in Pottstown and Norristown, Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele, referencing how ShotSpotter enables faster response times and enhanced situational awareness, [stated](#), “If someone is shot, we will know exactly where they are... We're not being quiet about this. We want it to be really unattractive to fire a gun in public in these places.”

Claim #6: “ShotSpotter has no impact on—or, due to over-dispatching, has slowed—police response time.”

Response: False

The role ShotSpotter plays in reducing response times—and all the ancillary benefits stemming from this (e.g., lives saved, aid rendered, arrests made, and evidence collected)—is one of the most frequently cited benefits of the technology. ShotSpotter’s design is integral to this outcome. Since ShotSpotter is deployed in outdoor environments, its sensors are specifically designed and calibrated to accurately triangulate the location of fire and count the number of rounds discharged. This means that responding officers have a much more precise location of where to respond.

An independent academic research report concluded that, when it comes to dispatching officers to reports of gunfire, “ShotSpotter alerts get dispatched almost two minutes faster than calls by residents, which is statistically significant.”² The report compared response times from a the three-square-mile area of the Winston-Salem where ShotSpotter is currently deployed, to areas of Winston-Salem where ShotSpotter sensors are not presently located (the control area), in order to objectively evaluate ShotSpotter’s efficacy. The report concludes that “results of response times indicate that implementation of ShotSpotter significantly reduced the time it takes police to respond to gunfire related calls for service...[and that] [t]hese results stand in contrast to the comparison area, which saw the exact opposite.” More specifically, “[w]here prior to ShotSpotter, dispatch times [across the current ShotSpotter deployment area and the control area] were within a minute of each other...after implementation, the ShotSpotter area delivered calls for service in nearly half the time, or four minutes faster.”

Officials regularly cite decreased response times as one of the greatest benefits of ShotSpotter:

- New Haven, Connecticut Mayor Justin Elicker [made clear](#) that “ShotSpotter has generally helped us be much more accurate about the location and respond much faster...Officers receive the notifications on their cell phones so they don’t have to wait for someone to call dispatch and dispatch to take that call and to dispatch officers to a location... It’s a very helpful tool.”

² The Impact of ShotSpotter Deployment in Winston-Salem, NC, Updated Results, 2024.

- In North Chicago, Illinois, officials [reported](#) that police response times have been cut by more than 10 minutes compared to before ShotSpotter was used, allowing police to render aid to victims and arrest suspects.
- Baltimore Police Department spokeswoman Lindsey Eldridge [noted](#) that ShotSpotter alerts “improve police response times to gunfire incidents,” a significant fact within a city where 91% of ShotSpotter alerts were not connected to a 911 call within 15 minutes.
- Sergeant Tyler Whaley of the Greenville, North Carolina Police Department [stated](#), “Officers are already enroute as soon as they receive that alert on their phone.”
- When speaking about ShotSpotter’s deployment in Pueblo, Colorado, Chief of Police Chris Noeller [said](#), “Statistically, the calls that we get from ShotSpotter come in 5 minutes before they do from our citizens.”

Claim #7: “Implementing ShotSpotter has no significant impact on firearm-related arrest outcomes.”

Response: Incorrect

Since it is proven that ShotSpotter improves police response times, it is unsurprising that ShotSpotter has led to the arrest of numerous gun criminals throughout Oakland. Some of the most notable examples are:

- On August 17, 2024, “officers were called to the 1600 block of 83rd Avenue following a ShotSpotter activation in the area...[where] they found four people who suffered gunshot wounds, two of whom were pronounced dead at the scene.” Two days later, “[p]olice...[announced](#) two arrests in connection with [the] quadruple shooting.”
- On March 10, 2024, “OPD officers...[r]esponding to a high-tech ShotSpotter alert...singled out a speedily fleeing vehicle. [After] a chase that ended on International Boulevard...[police] discover[ed]...a[] firearm [leading to further arrests](#).”
- On October 24, 2023, after being alerted to gunfire by a ShotSpotter activation, “officers , [detained multiple individuals](#) and recovered two firearms” related to the incident.
- On October 1, 2023, “[o]fficers responded...to [the 7800 block of Arthur Street] to investigate a ShotSpotter activation and...were directed to an adult male Oakland resident suffering from a gunshot wound” who later died from his injuries. “While investigating the shooting scene, officers were directed to a vehicle wanted in connection with the shooting...[and] Oakland police were able to [take two suspects](#) in the shooting...into custody.”

- On April 29, 2023, “[p]olice responded...to the 9000 block of MacArthur Boulevard following three alerts by the city’s ShotSpotter gunshot detection system...[where] they found [a gunshot victim who] died there.” OPD then [located](#) “Oakland resident Bernard Jimmerson...[who] allegedly was firing an assault rifle at passing cars because he was upset about the noise of vehicles racing down his street at night...Jimmerson allegedly fired and hit [the] 21-year-old [victim] in the head.” “Prosecutors...charged Jimmerson with second-degree murder.”
- On April 23, 2022, “OPD officers responded to the 1200 block of 45th Avenue for multiple ShotSpotter activations. Upon arrival, officers located evidence of a shooting and saw an individual running inside a business...After a lengthy standoff, an individual...was safely [taken into custody](#) [and] [a]n AR-15 style rifle was recovered from the scene.”
- On April 21, 2022, “officers responded to the 1600 block of Auseon Avenue for multiple ShotSpotter activations...Officers saw two individuals running away...and [took them into custody](#)...[and] also located a firearm. As officers continued their investigation...additional firearms, ammunition, and narcotics were recovered.”
- On February 27, 2021, “Oakland Police Communications Division received a ShotSpotter activation of multiple shots near [the 2900 block of Capp Street]...An extensive search by officers ended with seven individuals [taken into custody](#). Officers also recovered seven firearms, including high-powered rifles during the investigation.”

Similar outcomes have been documented outside of Oakland, as well:

- In Sparks, Nevada, within three months of deployment, ShotSpotter [led to the arrest](#) of a convicted felon accused of shooting a gun in the air following a domestic dispute.
- In Escambia County, Florida, before a 911 call could even be placed, a ShotSpotter alert directed officers to the scene of a shooting. Sherriff Chip Simmons credited the expedited response time with enabling the officers to confront the suspect before he was able to leave the scene. He was [arrested](#) and charged with attempted murder as well as gun-related offenses.
- In Chester, South Carolina, police [credited ShotSpotter](#) with playing a critical role in the arrest of an 18-year-old woman who was charged with murder and possession of a weapon during a violent crime.
- In Pittsburgh, to [objectively evaluate](#) ShotSpotter’s efficacy, government officials examined 20 firearm-related crimes—10 in ShotSpotter’s area of coverage, 10 outside of it. The City Council found that of the of the 10 crimes that ShotSpotter alerted to within the coverage area, 40% were

solved, whereas in the area outside of ShotSpotter's coverage area, only 10% of the gun crimes were solved.

Claim #8: "The recovery of guns does not lead to a commensurate increase in the rates of arrest."

Response: False

Claiming that ShotSpotter is ineffective because the recovery of guns—on its own—does not lead to a commensurate increase in the rates of arrest is an inappropriate metric of analysis. First, gun possession laws vary on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis. For example, in areas with highly permissive gun laws, merely possessing a firearm may not be a punishable offense, whether or not the discovery of that firearm stems from a ShotSpotter alert.

However, what we do know is that often, following a ShotSpotter alert, police officers do discover illegal firearms, which they are able to recover and take off the street. And once a gun is recovered, it can no longer be used to potentially commit a future crime—irrespective of whether the individual who possessed the gun is ultimately arrested.

Moreover, the assertion is also false. There have been many statements made by public officials, as well as stories covered in the media, where ShotSpotter led to firearms being taken off the street with offenders also being arrested. For example:

- *The New Hampshire Union Leader* [examined](#) the impact of ShotSpotter in Manchester, New Hampshire. According to Police Chief Allen Aldenberg, the system has contributed to a decrease in shootings and an increase in gun seizures and arrests. The city saw a 27% reduction in gunfire incidents in 2023. And through the first 4.5 months of the year, Manchester PD seized 67 guns, nearly triple the number compared to the same period the previous year. "To me, that's a significant number of arrests and guns that are off the street that we never would have got if we didn't have ShotSpotter," said Chief Aldenberg. "The arrests we make on shootings that we may never have been notified about — to me, that's worth it."
- In Sikeston, Missouri, WFLX-TV [reported](#) that the Department of Public Safety credited ShotSpotter with a recent arrest. Responding to a ShotSpotter alert, officers were able to obtain a search warrant for a nearby home where they found a stolen AK-47."
- In Columbus, Ohio, when asked if ShotSpotter was "money well spent," Deputy Chief of Police Richard Bass [responded](#), "[a]bsolutely, yes...we're able to connect this gun with a multitude of crimes in different locations all because of ShotSpotter and an our lab." Bash noted that in a 15-month period, ShotSpotter led Columbus police to make 133 arrests while removing 132 guns from the streets.

Taking guns off the street reduces crime and saves lives, which is the reason why police regularly tout their success in doing so, including on social media. Examples include:



NYPD 73rd Precinct @NYPD73Pct

Little did he know that officers from our Field Training Unit were right around the corner. After 3 shots rang out and a Shotspotter Activation, our officers identified the shooter and went on a brief foot pursuit. The male was apprehended and this small firearm was recovered!



11:11 PM · Mar 17, 2023 · 2,462 Views



NYPD Chief of Patrol @NYPDChiefPatrol

ShotSpotter activations helps alert our officers to possible shootings. Thanks to the quick response of the @NYPD79Pct Public Safety Team after an activation in Bed-Stuy in Brooklyn, they were able to recover this loaded firearm.

NYPD 79th Precinct @NYPD79Pct · Jan 5, 2023

Last night, while responding to a Shot Spotter call of shots fired, officers assigned to the 79th Precinct's Public Safety Team were able to swiftly and without incident apprehend the individual and recover this loaded firearm!



3:25 PM · Jan 6, 2023 · 2,219 Views



Oakland Police Dept. @oaklandpoliceca

Oakland Patrol Officers respond (2/28/19) to the 1300 block of Webster Street on a report of a ShotSpotter alert. Officers observe a man holding a sawed off shotgun. Officers safely make an arrest & recover gun.



2:05 PM · Mar 1, 2019

8 comments, 18 retweets, 92 likes



Oakland Police Dept. @oaklandpoliceca

OPD Recovers Two Dozen Firearms in Three Days
From December 31, 2021 - January 2, 2022, OPD recovered the firearms during high-risk enforcement stops and ShotSpotter Activations. These are a few of the recovered firearms.

In 2021, OPD recovered 1,200 firearms.



3:05 PM · Jan 5, 2022

6 comments, 6 retweets, 30 likes



NYPD NEWS @NYPDnews

Late last night, officers from @NYPD69Pct heard shots being fired and quickly canvassed for the suspect. Thanks to a @shotspotter activation that pinpointed the location and calls from concerned community members, a 19-year-old male was arrested and this gun was recovered.

NYPD 69th Precinct @NYPD69Pct · Aug 2, 2022

When gunshots rang out, our officers swiftly responded to the scene and apprehended the individuals responsible. With the help of officers from @NYPDPSA1 they were able to take this firearm off the streets of Canarsie. #NYPDProtecting #OneLessGun



9:28 AM · Aug 3, 2022



NYPD 121st Precinct @NYPD121Pct

This morning Officers Brown and Geoghegan quickly responded to a ShotSpotter activation on Richmond Terrace. Due to their expeditious response and keen investigation, they effected the arrest for the individual responsible for firing the gun also recovering the weapon. #onelessgun



NYPD Chief of Department and 3 others

3:10 PM · Mar 4, 2023 · 15.6K Views

NYPD 46th Precinct 
@NYPD46Pct

Outstanding police work by your Evening Patrol Officers Vargas, Bahaw, Sanchez and Santana, who made a safe arrest on University Avenue while investigating a @shotspotter activation last night. They took this illegally possessed, loaded gun of the streets of the Bronx. Great job!



 NYPD Chief of Patrol and 9 others

9:28 AM · Mar 29, 2022

NYPD 90th Precinct 
@NYPD90Pct

After being alerted by a #Shotspotter Activation, your Public Safety Officers responded within a moments notice. Two individuals were apprehended with this firearm. Outstanding Work! Keeping #Williamsburg Safe. #OneLessGun



 NYPDBrooklynNorth and 3 others

2:47 PM · Feb 17, 2022

NYPD 121st Precinct 
@NYPD121Pct

Fantastic work by your 121 Precinct Public Safety team, SOL, NCO's and patrol units who all worked cohesively while responding to a shotspotter activation leading to the recovery of a loaded and defaced firearm off our streets. #onelessgun



10:48 AM · Jul 5, 2022

NYPD 34th Precinct 
@NYPD34Pct

Great job by our Officers recovering this firearm and arresting a male involved after a Shotspotter activation call.



 NYPD Chief of Housing and 6 others

6:44 PM · Jun 10, 2022



Our Midnight Patrol Officers were working hard keeping our Washington Heights & Inwood residents safe. While responding to a shotspotter activation our Officers apprehended two persons and removed these guns off our streets.



NYPD NEWS and 3 others

10:09 AM · Feb 3, 2022



Outstanding work by your midnight patrol officers who responded to a ShotSpotter Activation & apprehended an individual with this loaded firearm.



NYPD Chief of Housing and 7 others

11:16 AM · Jan 9, 2022

Claim #9: “The recovery of bullet casings does not lead to a commensurate increase in the rates of arrest.”

Response: False

This is false, and the evidence is overwhelming:

- In Albuquerque, a man was [arrested](#) after being tied to 15 shootings, including multiple drive-by shootings, shootings at homes, and shooting and killing a dog. Using ShotSpotter to rapidly respond to shooting incidents, police leveraged the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives’ National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (“NIBIN”) to process recovering shell casing, which proved vital in tying cases back to the suspect. Albuquerque Police Department Commander Kyle Hartsock noted, “[o]fficers are used to it. They now know, get these casings, get them in these machines, and we’re going to produce leads.”
- In Freeport, Illinois, Police Chief Shenberger [recounted](#) an instance where he “helped with the search warrant, and they could see where the shots fired were...They found shell casings exactly where the alert was that led to the back door of a residence. So, we were able to get a search warrant, and then we found a pistol that had an illegal fully automatic switch affixed to the back of it.” Interestingly, Chief Shenberger contrasted this experience to his experience policing in

Freeport prior to ShotSpotter’s deployment, noting “law enforcement relied on community members reporting shots fired, leading to inefficient investigations and lost time for officers as they attempted to track down crime scenes.”

- In Toledo, Police Chief Mike Troendle [noted](#) that ShotSpotter alerts led to Toledo Police “responding to more [shots fired] calls...[which] allows us to collect more of the casings at the scene which allows us, through other technology, to match up those casings and link crimes together. Ultimately while ShotSpotter might not solve the crime, the evidence we collect because of ShotSpotter does help us solve crimes.”
- In Denver, police have [stated](#) that “in nearly 2,000 of [ShotSpotter alert] incidents, they found shell casings connected to other crimes, made 337 arrests and recovered 375 guns.”

Claim #10: “ShotSpotter results in prosecutors dismissing charges at trial.”

Response: False

In fact, the exact opposite is true. ShotSpotter is regularly used by prosecutors across the country and its evidentiary value has been repeatedly upheld by courts. ShotSpotter’s precision and accuracy are the leading reasons why it has become a strong tool for prosecutors in their fight against gun violence. Each time a ShotSpotter alert picks up gunfire, it creates evidence of the incident, which then can be introduced during criminal proceedings. ShotSpotter’s forensic evidence has been formally accepted in over 340 cases across 24 states, and prosecutors have repeatedly prevailed in dozens of *Frye* and *Daubert* challenges where defendants have sought to exclude ShotSpotter evidence. Scores of state and federal judges have assessed ShotSpotter’s reliability under rigorous evidentiary standards. This is part of the reason why, in 2022, Oakland prosecutors [acknowledged](#) that SoundThinking provided “[f]ive detailed forensic reports [and] [e]xpert witness and court preparation for eight cases...in relation to specific ShotSpotter activations.” Some notable instances of this in Oakland are:

- In [People v. Arlison Johnson](#), audio recording of a shooting picked up by ShotSpotter was admitted as a key piece of evidence against the defendant.
- [People v. Barrientos](#), a case where a Union City gang member was accused of attempted murder on a Fremont Police Officer who was attempting to make an arrest within Oakland, audio recording of the shooting was again considered an essential piece of evidence in the trial.
- SoundThinking has completed 94 detailed forensic reports (“DFR”) for Oakland and its forensic expert witnesses have been called to testify in court 23 times.

Examples of prosecutors utilizing ShotSpotter evidence in their cases outside of Oakland include:

- In New York City, SoundThinking has prepared a total of 586 DFRs (at the request of either the New York Police Department or New York City District Attorneys) for use in New York State judicial proceedings and has been asked to provide either an expert or custodian witness for 133 cases tried in New York courts. In addition, New York City Assistant District Attorneys have credited one of SoundThinking’s forensic experts as being integral to successfully prosecuting gun criminals in multiple cases. Examples of New York State courts ruling on the admissibility of ShotSpotter evidence include:
 - In *People v. Pope*, the Supreme Court, Appellate Division, First Department, New York rejected the defendant’s motion to suppress evidence, finding that “[t]he gunfire-detection technology ShotSpotter reported that numerous shots had been fired at a particular location...[and] [t]he ShotSpotter report provided corroboration of the presence of criminality, as well as demonstrating the urgency of the situation and the risk of officers’ safety...[meaning] the police had reasonable suspicion to stop and frisk the defendant.”
 - In *People v. Williams*—another case in which the defendant sought to preclude New York State prosecutors from presenting ShotSpotter evidence—the court wrote that “there is no ‘marked conflict’ or conflicting scientific opinions with respect to ShotSpotter in the relevant scientific community,” and then went on to note that “numerous courts have address the issues [against ShotSpotter] raised by the defense, and have held that ShotSpotter is generally accepted as reliable and accurate, and therefore, admissible evidence.”³
 - In *People v. Jonas*, the Kings County Court once again denied a motion to preclude ShotSpotter evidence. In addition to citing the verbatim language used in the *People v. Williams* decision, the judge in this case went a step further, adding “[c]ourts have further held that ShotSpotter...incorporates established and generally accepted technologies [to detect gunfire],” as the basis for rejecting the defendant’s objection to the use of ShotSpotter evidence.⁴
 - In *United States v. Hawkins*, a case involving events in New York City, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a district court’s finding that officers had reasonable suspicion to initiate a *Terry* stop based in part on a ShotSpotter alert, rejecting the defendant’s arguments that ShotSpotter was unreliable for these purposes and citing the officer’s past experience with ShotSpotter as a powerful and accurate tool. The case stands for the proposition that officers may rely on ShotSpotter as part of their reasonable articulable

³ See *The People of the State of New York v. Lewis Williams*, Supreme Court of The State of New York, County of Kings: Part 29, Ind. No. 6824-2018 (October 19, 2021).

⁴ See *The People of the State of New York v. Harry Jonas*, Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of Kings: Part 29, Ind. No. 2236-2020 (April 11, 2022).

suspicion and probable cause determinations, absent any after-the-fact inquiry into the technology's reliability.

- In Winston-Salem, WSPD Captain Amy Gaudlin [described](#) ShotSpotter as “invaluable” when it comes to findings evidence that can be used to successfully prosecute a case. She also has stated that ShotSpotter “helps us connect more crimes...generate investigative leads, which ultimately helps us to solve more crime and put the people responsible for this kind of violence in our community in jail.”
- An Urban Institute [study](#) showed comparable evidentiary benefits provided by ShotSpotter in police investigations across Denver, Colorado, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Richmond, Virginia.

Claim #11: “ShotSpotter leads to increased civil rights abuses and over policing of marginalized communities.”

Response: Incorrect

Members of minority-majority communities are among ShotSpotter's most vocal proponents. In 2022, Fallon Research & Communications Inc. worked with the National Policing Institute to survey residents' perspectives on gunshot detection technology in Chicago. The study [revealed](#) two principal findings:

- 1) Of the “large majority of participants who supported the use of gunshot detection in Chicago (72%)...[d]emographically, Hispanic/Latinos supported use of funding for the technology at 73%, with African Americans at 64% and Whites at 59%,” and
- 2) When an assessment of ShotSpotter's favorability was polled, “[p]articipants that reported being Hispanic or Latino (79%) were most likely to have a favorable view of ShotSpotter compared to Blacks or African Americans (67%) or Whites (55%).”

In other words, in terms of both support for, and favorability of, ShotSpotter, the two most enthusiastic communities were those whose populations are predominantly of color. These findings are further buttressed by the University of Cincinnati, which “conducted an independent community sentiment [survey](#) of residents living in a ShotSpotter-coverage area and found that 95% thought it was effective at fighting crime, while 89% recommended it to other neighborhoods.”

Within Chicago, the alderpeople of minority-majority wards are among the most ardent supporters of ShotSpotter. Here is a sample of their public statements:

- Alderman Anthony Beale ([9th Ward](#), 92.6% Black and 3.5% Latino) stated “it's really important that we have the tools necessary to continue to fight gun violence in our community...[d]on't take

away this tool that we need...[w]e need ShotSpotter, we need technology like that to help our communities.”

- Alderwoman Monique Scott ([24th Ward](#), 64.7% Black, 27.5% Latino) [said](#) “[t]his is something my community needs.”
- Alderman Raymond Lopez ([15th Ward](#), 20% Black, 70.1% Latino) [stated](#) “ShotSpotter...brought our [CPD officers] to [police officers’ Ariana Preston and Luis Huesca] location [after they were shot] either because 911 wasn’t called, or it was called to the wrong location, but ShotSpotter was able to inform our...first responders, where to go.”
- Alderwoman Silvana Tabares ([23rd Ward](#), 3.5% Black, 76.1% Latino) has [made clear](#) that “[a]ll of the experts believe people in law enforcement who actually use the technology, and the vast majority of people who live in communities where it is deployed agree that ShotSpotter is a vital tool...ShotSpotter cuts response times, allows officers to render medical aid faster, preserve evidence and yes, make arrests...[o]pponents do not want to face this fact.”

The sentiment of Chicago’s alderpeople has been reiterated by local clergy members, as well.

- In a radio [interview](#), Chicago Pastor Corey Brooks criticized Mayor Brandon Johnson’s efforts to end ShotSpotter’s contract. Brooks argued that ShotSpotter is desperately needed in high-crime areas like the South and West sides of Chicago to help respond to gun violence that plagues those communities. “One of the worst things that could have happened in Chicago is for us to have gotten rid of ShotSpotter,” he explained. “Every day there are children killed. Every day there are young men gunned down. Every day the gangs attack and attack and destroy themselves in their communities. But as a result, we’re told not to do anything about it. It’s like, shut up, back off...don’t get involved.”
- [KOMO-TV](#) and [other outlets](#) reported on a public meeting in Seattle where community advocates argued that ShotSpotter is needed to address Seattle’s rising gun violence. “We can have (opponents of the expansion) talk about BIPOC, about the Black community, but have they been to a funeral? How many times have they sat with a mother crying because their son has been killed?” asked Rev. Harriett Waldon. “The Black community wants [ShotSpotter]. We need it,” added community advocate Victoria Bush.

This feedback is not surprising. Because communities of color unfortunately have long borne the brunt of gun-related violence, residents of these neighborhoods are among the most supportive of ShotSpotter’s benefits. The positive effect that ShotSpotter has on mitigating some of the fear that our most vulnerable and underserved communities face from gun violence is the reason that we continue to see increased demand for our services nationwide.

Claim #12: “ShotSpotter alerts to false alarms (e.g., fireworks, automobiles backfiring, and construction noises) which diverts resources away from legitimate policing needs.”

Response: False

This argument is both factually and conceptually spurious. Factually, ShotSpotter has a contractually guaranteed 90% accuracy rate for detecting, classifying, and publishing outdoor gunfire incidents, with financial penalties for the company for underperformance. SoundThinking is highly motivated to maintain and improve the system’s accuracy. In fact, although SoundThinking is contractually committed to a 90% accuracy rate, ShotSpotter’s actual accuracy rate across all customers is 97%. This is a fact confirmed by independent analyses of ShotSpotter data from 2019 through 2022 across all police department customers by data analytics firm Edgeworth Analytics. Based on this independent analysis, we not only “purport” to accurately detect gunshot incidents, but we also consistently affirm and validate that we do so.

What this means is that, when a ShotSpotter alert is triggered, the overwhelming likelihood is that it is alerting to gunfire. An article profiling ShotSpotter’s effectiveness in discerning gunshots from other loud explosive noises (e.g., fireworks), was [published](#) in *The Oaklandside*. Ironically, a reason that Douglas, Georgia, police [implemented](#) ShotSpotter was because officers were being dispatched to too many reports of gunfire that turned out to be “things like fireworks or a car backfiring,” and that the department turned to ShotSpotter because “it can differentiate those things.”

Therefore, it is disingenuous to suggest that ShotSpotter exacerbates that situation. In fact, one ShotSpotter benefit is that it acts as a force multiplier, a point expressly [acknowledged](#) by Chief Mitchell. This is especially important amid chronic police officer staffing shortages. In Pueblo, Colorado, Chief Chris Noelle [stated](#), “With our manpower issues, it’s a way to force multiply the personnel that we have.” Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell echoed this sentiment, [saying](#), “These technologies will allow us to police more efficiently given low staffing levels.”

Furthermore, beyond being factually incorrect, the argument is also conceptually invalid. Making the argument that ShotSpotter diverts scarce police resources away from legitimate police needs assumes that we are living in a real-life version of *Minority Report*, where police can foresee crimes before they are committed. Unfortunately, the reality is that determining whether a crime has been committed is a determination that needs to be made after the purported illegal act has already been carried out. The notion that ShotSpotter depletes police assets that could otherwise be utilized elsewhere is logically analogous to saying that police officers should not respond to burglar alarms, since “[94-99%](#) of police responses are to false alarms,” or that the firefighters should not be dispatched when a fire alarm is sounding since only “[2%](#) of confirmed incidents from automatic fire alarms [a]re the result of an actual fire.” So, not only is ShotSpotter exponentially more accurate (97%) than either police (1-6%) or fire alarms (2%), investigating a ShotSpotter alert is as defensible from a resource-allocation perspective as is responding to a burglary or fire alarm.

Claim #13: “ShotSpotter’s accuracy rate is significantly below the 90% requirement.”

Response: Incorrect

This is also untrue. In addition to the independent studies reviewing—and confirming—that ShotSpotter exceeds the 90% accuracy requirement, municipalities that utilize the technology have affirmed the same. For example, in Richland County, Wisconsin, the media [reported](#) on the release of data showing that ShotSpotter was 97% accurate. And, in Pittsburgh, the city spent \$85,000 to [expand](#) its use of ShotSpotter into the Carrick neighborhood. Speaking about the expansion, Pittsburgh City Councilman Anthony Coghill, who represents Carrick, noted that the technology has a 90%+ accuracy rate.

Claim #14: “Many ShotSpotter alerts are from negligent discharge of a firearm, not a violent crime.”

Response: Ignores the point

Bullets are deadly, and their lethality does not diminish based on whether they were discharged negligently or with violent intent. This is why it is illegal to discharge a weapon in densely populated areas—such as Oakland—irrespective of the motivation. When it occurs, police *should* be notified, and they *should* respond to investigate.

Law enforcement officials in Toledo, Ohio have acknowledged this. Lieutenant Kellie Lenhardt [stated](#), “Whether those were involved in shooting incidents, felonius [*sic*] assaults, just celebratory gunfire, in any case, discharging that firearm within the city is dangerous and [ShotSpotter]’s getting those illegal guns and illegal gunfire off the streets.”

Claim #15: “ShotSpotter sends police to scenes where no evidence of a crime is found.”

Response: Incorrect

A key principle holds true in law enforcement: *the absence of evidence isn’t evidence of absence*.

Criminals are not predisposed to leave their weapons at crime scenes for obvious reasons. Similarly, it is incorrect to assume that shell casings will be recovered at every location where a gunfire incident occurred. Shell casings may be unable to be recovered for many reasons (e.g., use of a revolver, firing from a vehicle where shell casings remain in the car, etc.). Furthermore, criminals understand that not only firearms, but also shell casings, can be traced back to them through entry in NIBIN, incentivizing them to collect spent casings before leaving the scene. Once again, this means that the absence of shell casings at the scene does not prove a shooting did not occur.

The same holds true for locating victims and perpetrators. Of course, not every gunfire incident results in a victim being struck. Additionally, since many incidents are criminal-on-criminal shootings, if a struck victim *can* extricate themselves from the scene of a shooting, they may very well do so. And, of course, perpetrators flee crime scenes to avoid arrest.

Claim #16: “ShotSpotter results in less reporting of shots fired to 911.”

Response: False

ShotSpotter was *created* because of a chronic underreporting of gunfire incidents to 911. According to the Brookings Institution, [more than 80 percent](#) of gunfire incidents go unreported.

Unfortunately, this disparity is even more pronounced in Oakland. According to OPD, “about [86-percent](#) of shootings across the city are not reported.” To contextualize just how significant this underreporting is, from January to mid-May 2024, “[t]he city [recorded](#) more than 2,520 reports [of gunfire]” by ShotSpotter. Had ShotSpotter not been accessible to first responders, statistically, only about 350 of these incidents of gunfire would have been reported to police via 911. Obviously, each unreported gunfire incident deprives OPD of the opportunity to dispatch first responders to render aid to victims, catch perpetrators, collect forensic evidence, speak with witnesses, and reassure the community.

ShotSpotter alerts police to virtually all gunfire in a community’s coverage area within 60 seconds. The cost to Oakland of this difference is not best measured in dollars and cents; instead, it’s measured in evidence not collected, illegal guns not recovered, criminals not apprehended, and lives not saved.

The frustration police feel in gunfire underreporting is well-documented. For example, Pensacola Police Chief Eric Randall [stated](#), “it’s been my experience that people don’t always call 911” after hearing gunfire.

A harsh reality in some neighborhoods most adversely impacted by gun violence is that gun violence becomes “normalized,” and residents become so accustomed to gunfire, it goes unreported to police. When community members observe chronic criminality with a corresponding lack of police response, their faith in law enforcement erodes. Deployment of ShotSpotter helps repair these frayed relationships. Some examples of this include:

- In Winston-Salem, “[w]ith the integration of ShotSpotter, officers are now promptly informed of gunfire in the coverage area, which means a significant [increase in police responsiveness](#), approximately 80% more responses than before. As a result, “residents who may have hesitated to report gunfire are witnessing a greater police presence each time such incidents are detected...[and that] officers, upon response, are actively engaging with residents by existing their vehicles and initiating discussions about the incidents.” Unsurprisingly, this change in dynamics

“has led to a notable upswing in positive police-citizen interactions during times of heightened gun violence in the community.”

- In North Chicago, Illinois, Police Chief Lazaro Perez has [observed](#) that the city’s implementation of ShotSpotter is improving relations between the police and city residents, since “[w]e show up almost immediately because we self-dispatch...[e]very time there’s gunfire, a cop shows up...[so] [p]eople are seeing more of the police in their neighborhood...[and] they’re more apt to cooperate and let us know what is going on.”

Claim #17: “No data has ever been provided to support ongoing use of ShotSpotter.”

Response: False

OPD has repeatedly provided both City Council and PSC with reporting and statistics that proves the efficacy of ShotSpotter technology throughout Oakland.

Furthermore, there is no greater data to support ongoing use of ShotSpotter than municipalities which have either expanded and/or renewed their ShotSpotter coverage after observing the technology’s success. For example:

- Albuquerque [requested](#) \$40 million in state funding, part of which is earmarked to purchase additional ShotSpotter coverage. Officials credit the technology with helping to build better cases and catch people faster, including in high-profile cases. “It’s about officer safety. It’s about community safety,” said Albuquerque Deputy Chief J.J. Griego.
- The Newark City Council [voted](#) to expand ShotSpotter, which the City has deployed since 2011. “I think it’s an important tool for the police division to have in order to address any suspected shots fired or criminal activity in the neighborhood,” said North Ward City Councilman Anibal Ramos.
- Springfield also [decided](#) to expand its deployment of ShotSpotter by 50%. Springfield Police said the tool has been crucial, giving officers leads in shooting investigations. “To me [ShotSpotter is] a very powerful tool that’s important for Springfield citizens to keep them safe. It’s also important to...keep our officers safe. There’s an officer safety component,” said Springfield Police Chief Scarlette.
- Cleveland [announced](#) plans to expand ShotSpotter technology to all five police district neighborhoods. Over the past three years, ShotSpotter has alerted police to more than 10,000 shooting incidents, including over 24,000 rounds fired. “The ShotSpotter technology is an incredibly important element that is greatly improving the capabilities of police officers to act swiftly in the event of critical incidents,” said Cleveland Police Chief Wayne Drummond. “Data

reflects that shootings are responded to faster, and lives are saved, which is by far the greatest benefit.

- Bakersfield, California City Council [voted unanimously](#) to expand the City’s ShotSpotter system in light of the fact that after the first year of use, ShotSpotter led to 37 guns being confiscated and 50 people being arrested in connection to 33 different crimes.

Claim #18: “Many jurisdictions have declined to adopt the technology after pilots or have not to renewed upon expiration.”

Response: False and misleading

Policing needs are unique to each community, and SoundThinking acknowledges that ShotSpotter is not suitable for every municipality. For example, Durham, North Carolina [chose](#) not to renew ShotSpotter after a one-year pilot in favor of focusing on violence prevention measures such as “mental health services...workforce development...programming for youth...housing...[and] art.” Notably, this decision drew [condemnation](#) from both the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore of the city. Similarly, after [reports indicated](#) that St. Louis County may terminate its ShotSpotter contract due to funding issues, backlash from community members and police officials led Shalonda Webb, Chair of the St. Louis County Council, to publicly state that she would fight any attempt to reconcile budget shortfalls with cuts to ShotSpotter.

Winston-Salem [also](#) elected not to renew its ShotSpotter contract in order to direct funding toward drone-focused policing. However, there is evidence that proves drones work best when paired with an acoustic tool, such as ShotSpotter. For example, prior to being sworn in as Sheriff of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Kevin McMahill outlined his plan “to position scores of drones around...problem areas and [link them](#) to ShotSpotter sensor networks that detect and alert police to gunfire.” Similarly, in May 2024, the New York Police Department announced it was rolling out a drone program in which “drones will [respond to ShotSpotter alerts](#)...to enhance situational awareness, officer safety, and resource deployment efficiency.” And North Chicago—which already deploys ShotSpotter to combat gun violence—is weighing adding drones [to complement ShotSpotter](#).

When Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson [announced](#) he would not renew the technology upon the city’s contract expiring, his decision proved so unpopular in the Chicago neighborhoods most plagued by gun violence that, on May 22, 2024, 34 of 50 Chicago alderpersons [voted to strip](#) Johnson of his ability to unilaterally terminate ShotSpotter’s contract with the city—a virtually unprecedented rebuke. This action exemplifies how integral elected officials most attuned to community-specific needs find ShotSpotter to be.

With that said, the benefits that ShotSpotter delivers to our municipal partners are well documented, independently validated, and consistently reaffirmed. It is for this reason that, between 2023

and 2024 year to date, approximately 40 new municipalities deployed ShotSpotter within their communities, 136 existing municipalities across the country renewed ShotSpotter contracts, and 25 of those existing municipalities expanded their coverage areas.

In fact, ShotSpotter’s proven success is often what encourages new municipalities to adopt the technology. In Erie, Pennsylvania, Police Chief Dan Spizarny said [in an interview](#) about the pending deployment of ShotSpotter in his city: “There have been other stories...where, if it hadn't been for ShotSpotter, the police would never have been sent to a location. When they get there, they find a victim who is hanging onto life. If we can get them medical help that much quicker, we are going to save a life.”