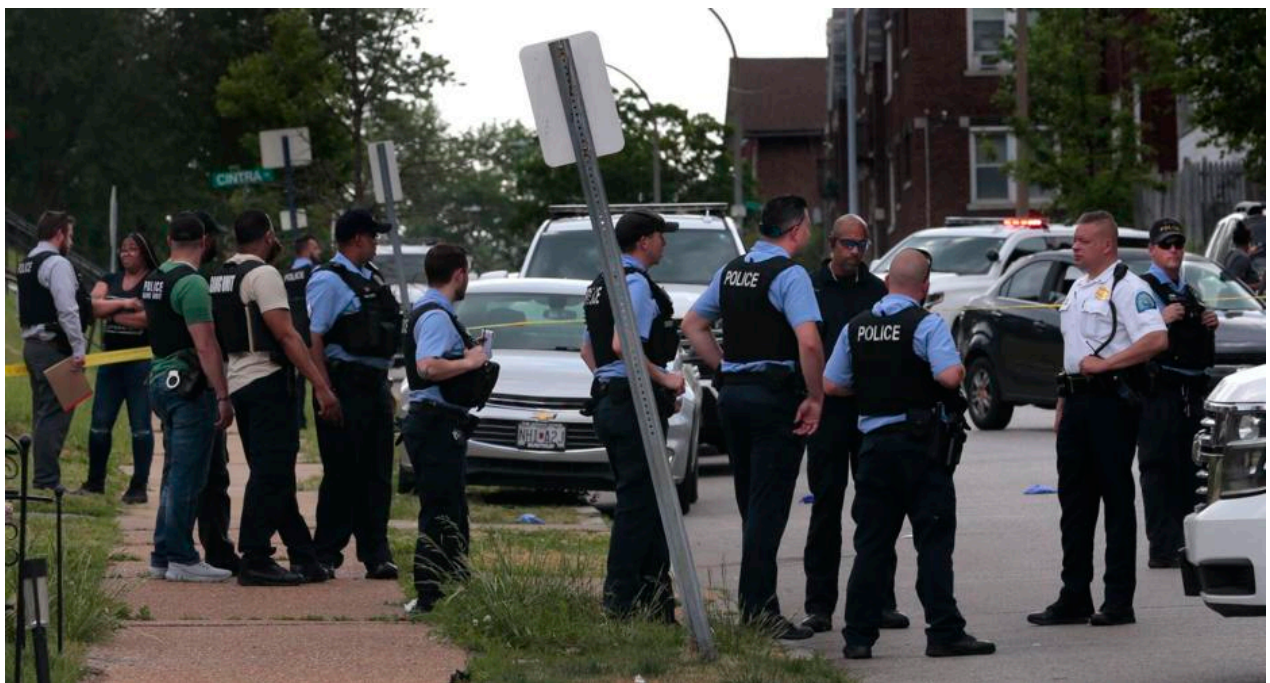


# Opinion: St. Louis city and county are collaborating against crime

by Kenneth L. Gregory and Robert J. Tracy and · April 25, 2024



St. Louis police officers stand out of the way as crime scene officers photograph the area where a man was shot numerous times in a car in the 4500 block of Carter Avenue in the Penrose neighborhood last May.

In recent years, the city of St. Louis and St. Louis County have seen tremendous growth and progress. We have experienced new development, a promising reduction in homicides and the advent of new programs that have enhanced the quality of life for residents throughout our region.

We have also seen advancements in our approach to policing our region, with both new and enhanced strategies and the adoption of evidence-based approaches to reducing crime.

Despite these advancements and new strategies, we continue to face critical challenges with violent crime.

Earlier this year, regional elected officials and law enforcement leaders set an ambitious goal: to decrease homicides and shooting incidents by 20 percent over the next three years.

A key to achieving this goal is regional collaboration. We know well that crime does not respect jurisdictional boundaries and that a small number of individuals are responsible for driving violent crime throughout our region. This is precisely why our strong collaborations and intelligence-sharing mechanisms are so critical.

On a daily basis, our two police departments share information and collaborate on investigations. We know how important it is that we have open lines of communication about criminal activity in our respective areas of responsibility. And this strong partnership pays off when we can work together to hold offenders accountable for their actions.

At the same time, a goal this ambitious cannot be achieved by law enforcement alone. While we are proud of the work our police officers do to enhance public safety in the city and county, we also know we cannot do it all.

That is why we support Save Lives Now! This is a blueprint for a collaborative anti-violence program for the St. Louis region that uses fast and proven tactics directly engaging with those individuals causing violent crime.

This initiative is based not only on the tenets of regional collaboration, but it also brings together other voices and experts to help us target our efforts to significantly reduce crime and save lives.

This blueprint includes three core strategies — focused deterrence, cognitive behavioral therapy and street outreach.

Focused deterrence is a nationally recognized model that has been adopted —with great success — by police departments and communities across the country. The strategy leverages two simple messages that are delivered to those who are driving violence: If you continue to bring violence to our streets, we will stop you. If you commit to stopping, we will help you.

These messages are delivered not only by law enforcement leaders and prosecutors, but also by trusted messengers, and by speakers who deliver the moral voice of the community to appeal to individuals with the highest propensity for violence.

Those who reject the message face the consequences, which may include arrest, prosecution and incarceration. For those who accept support, they are provided with a range of services and treatment that can help them turn their lives around.

Cities across the country have seen the positive results from this proven approach— with significant reductions in violence in Chicago (37%), Philadelphia (35%), Indianapolis (34%) and Boston (31%).

Combined with the strategies of cognitive behavioral therapy and street outreach, focused deterrence holds the promise of real positive change — and sustained improvements in public safety — for our entire region, and we look forward to being a part of these solutions.

Whether you ask residents or elected officials, community leaders or our business partners, the consensus is clear: We need to act decisively to reduce violent crime and make our region safer.

The time is now, and these tools and collaborations hold the promise of an even brighter future for our region.

*Col. Gregory leads the St. Louis County Police Department. Commissioner Tracy leads the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.*