



To: City Council, City of Fayetteville, NC
Thru: City Manager's Office (CMO)
From: Office of Strategic Performance & Analytics (SPA) | Fayetteville Police Department (FPD) | Office of Special Projects | Office of Community Safety (OCS) | SoundThinking (ShotSpotter)
Date: April 2026
Re: Executive Summary — Wilson Center's ShotSpotter Program Evaluation

I. COUNCIL'S REQUEST

The City Council directed staff on September 2, 2025, to conduct a data review of ShotSpotter effectiveness, examining eighteen (18) months of activity across the three designated coverage zones. Specifically, Council requested that staff: compare ShotSpotter alerts with 911 calls for service; assess program productivity through evidence collection, victim identification, and arrest outcomes; and determine whether ShotSpotter provides measurable impact when deployed without a corresponding 911 call.

II. WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

- **ShotSpotter improves speed and precision of police response.** Officers are dispatched ~135 seconds (over 2 minutes) faster for ShotSpotter alerts than for 911 calls alone, and arrive on scene ~2 minutes sooner. FPD's public ShotSpotter Dashboard reports an 97% location accuracy rate as of April 2026.
- **ShotSpotter substantially increased in-zone notification volume.** Within the zones over 18 months, the system produced 685 ShotSpotter-only alerts and 106 ShotSpotter + 911 alerts, compared to only 88 resident-initiated 911-only calls — meaning the vast majority of in-zone gunshot notifications originated from ShotSpotter, not from residents.
- **Productivity is substantially higher when ShotSpotter is paired with a 911 call.** Across every measure, ShotSpotter + 911 alerts outperform ShotSpotter-only alerts: shell casing recovery (52.5% vs. 16.5%), witness location (28.4% vs. 7.4%), victim identification (12.3% vs. 0.5%), aid rendered to victims (9.3% vs. 0.4%), arrests (9.8% vs. 1.8%), and alert confirmation (67.2% vs. 23.7%). All homicides during the evaluation period occurred in cases involving both a ShotSpotter alert and a 911 call; per the Wilson Center study, none occurred in ShotSpotter-only cases.
- **No direct correlation between ShotSpotter implementation and citywide decrease in gun violence.** Citywide gunshot-related incidents declined from ~17.1 to ~10.6 per month, but this decline predates ShotSpotter, mirrors national trends, and cannot be attributed to the technology. Incident levels within the zones remained relatively stable, which the Study indicates does not suggest a deterrent effect.

III. WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNCIL'S DECISION

ShotSpotter's measurable value is operational, not investigative. The technology reliably and effectively delivers what it was designed to deliver: faster dispatch, faster arrival, and precise location using acoustic technology and alert-location mapping. It does not, on its own, translate into meaningfully higher arrest rates, evidence recovery, or victim outcomes when deployed without a companion 911 call.

The key productivity gains come from the combination of ShotSpotter-alerts and 911 calls, not from ShotSpotter-alerts alone. The Wilson Center study is direct on this point: “we do not have evidence that ShotSpotter-only notifications significantly improve police productivity or outcomes without corroborating 911 calls.” This is the most direct answer available to Council’s core question.

Council’s directive has one element that cannot be fully answered with the data available. Answering whether ShotSpotter-only alerts outperform 911-only calls requires comparable outcome data for both — and no such dataset exists for 911-only gunshot responses, since FPD’s documentation for those calls lives only in individual incident reports that were not accessible to the evaluators. The one available proxy comparison (OCA assignment rates: 17.8% ShotSpotter-only vs. 18.0% 911-only) suggests roughly equivalent performance, but the Study explicitly cautions this is not a definitive comparison.

Peer benchmark assessment of ShotSpotter deployments across North Carolina municipalities: As of April 2026, six (6) North Carolina cities — including the City of Fayetteville — actively use ShotSpotter, while three (3) additional North Carolina cities previously deployed ShotSpotter and voted not to renew.

IV. WHAT THE PROJECT TEAM HAS DONE

Responsive to the Study’s recommendations, the Project Team has implemented the following, effective January 4, 2026:

- **SoundThinking interface updates:** “Alert Responded” and “Alert Pending” fields now provide formal closure paths and preserve connections to later-developing cases (NIBIN matches, arrests, investigations).
- **FPD Ground Truth Workbook updates:** New “Status” and “Offense Reported” columns mirror the SoundThinking interface for consistency and future investigative value.
- **Public-facing ShotSpotter Dashboard:** A new “Crimes Reported from ShotSpotter Alerts” view provides transparency on alert-to-outcome tracking.
- **Community Safety Activations:** The Office of Community Safety issued RFP COF1516986 on February 10, 2026, funding up to four Safe Space Activations in the zones (\$100,000 total from local City sources) running April through August 2026.

V. KEY DATES

- **Administrative Report Delivery:** May 11, 2026
- **Phase 1 Data Collection:** January 4 – June 30, 2026
- **30-Day Renewal/Nonrenewal Notice Deadline:** August 26, 2026
- **ShotSpotter Contract Expiration:** September 27, 2026

This summary and the full Administrative Report are intended solely to equip Council with the information available and necessary to make an informed determination. The Project Team remains available for additional briefings, questions, or supplemental analysis prior to the August 26, 2026, notice deadline.