

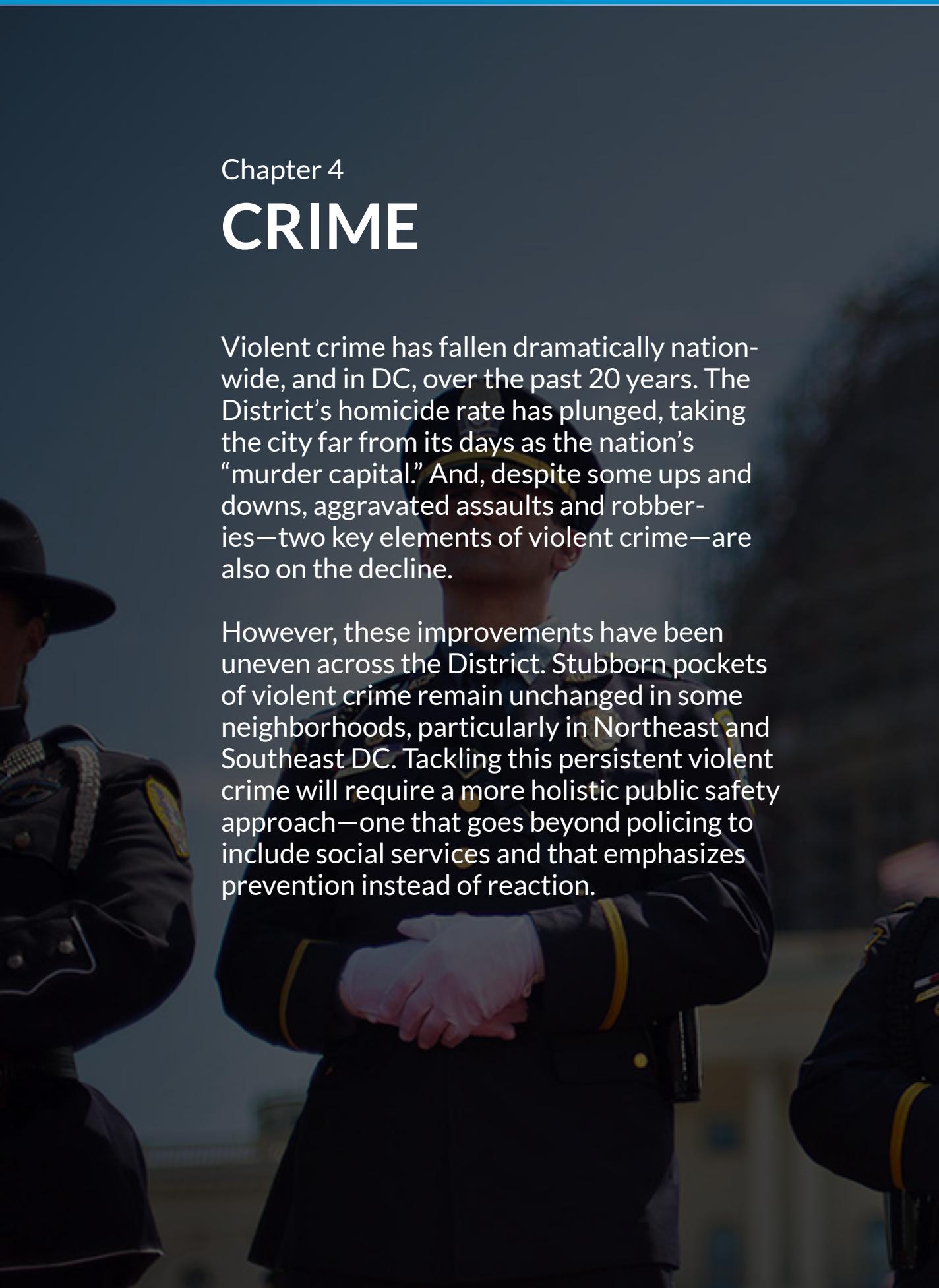


Chapter 4

CRIME

Violent crime has fallen dramatically nationwide, and in DC, over the past 20 years. The District's homicide rate has plunged, taking the city far from its days as the nation's "murder capital." And, despite some ups and downs, aggravated assaults and robberies—two key elements of violent crime—are also on the decline.

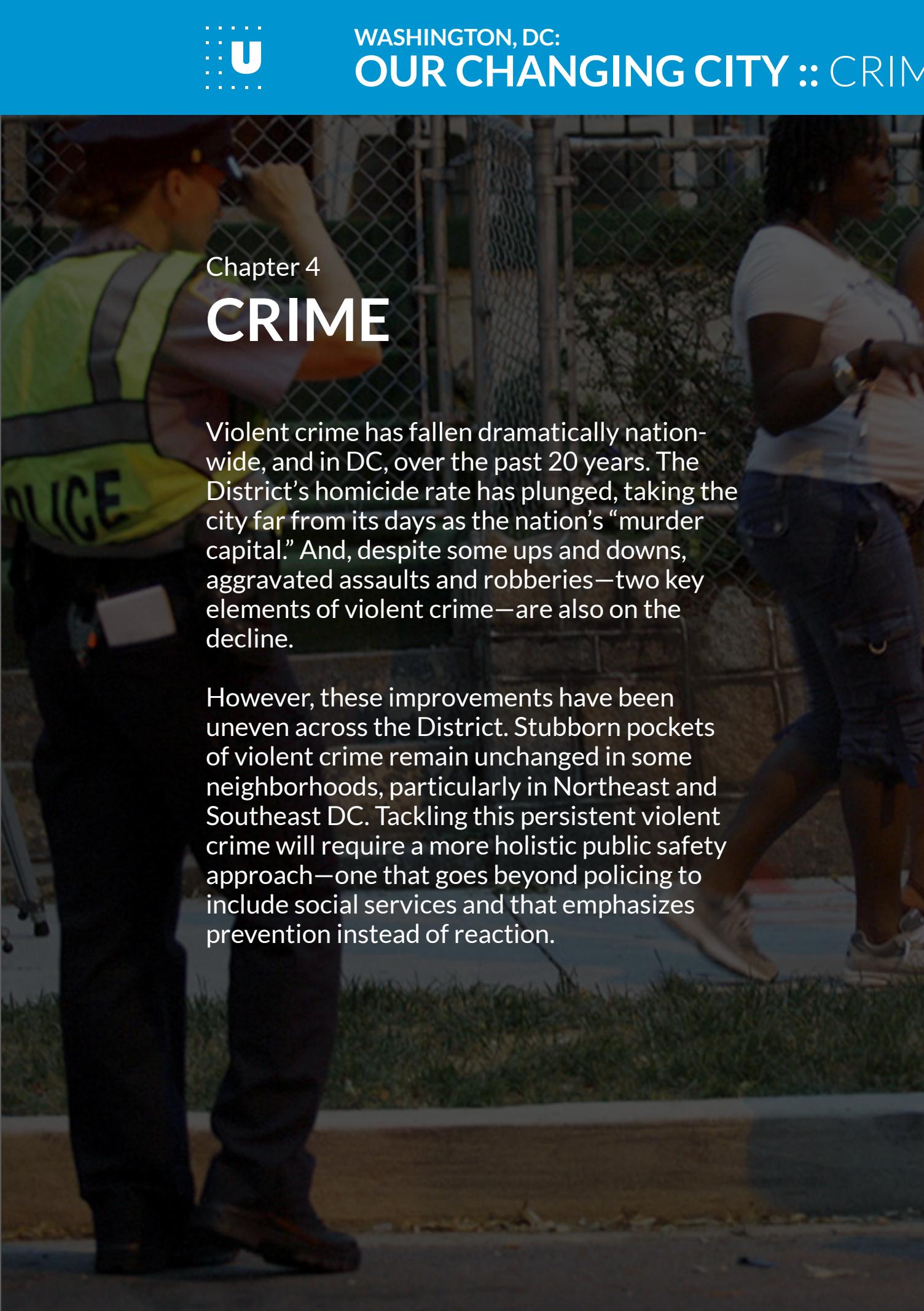
However, these improvements have been uneven across the District. Stubborn pockets of violent crime remain unchanged in some neighborhoods, particularly in Northeast and Southeast DC. Tackling this persistent violent crime will require a more holistic public safety approach—one that goes beyond policing to include social services and that emphasizes prevention instead of reaction.





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Violent crime continues falling steadily beyond the 1990s crime drop

Researchers are still figuring out what caused the nationwide drop in violent crime in the mid- to late 90s. DC is a compelling case because it has been particularly successful at extending that crime decline. That success is due in large part to a renewed emphasis on community-oriented policing and evidence-based tactics, as well as changing demographics and economic growth.

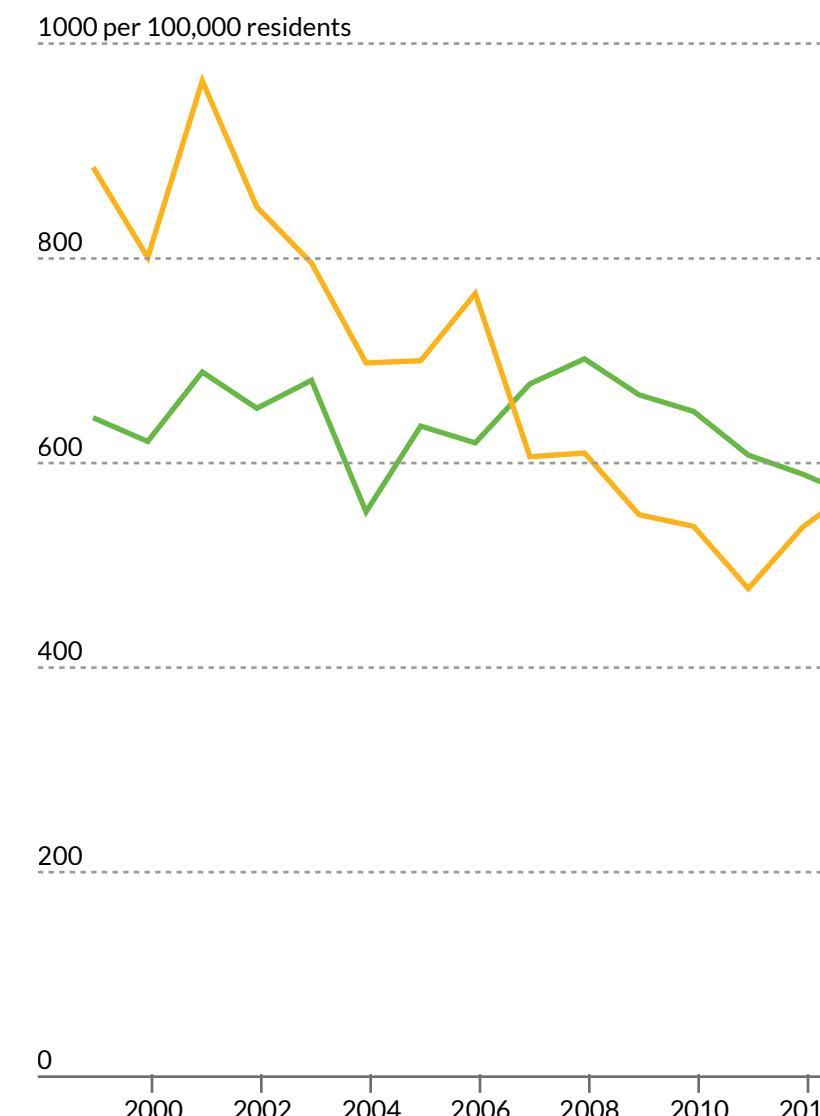
DC Police Chief Cathy Lanier has emphasized community engagement by increasing foot patrols, using social media and a tip line to foster community involvement, encouraging more one-on-one interactions between police and residents, and valuing empathy in police recruitment and training.

Lanier has also rejected zero-tolerance and “hot spots” policing, aggressive strategies that combat violent crime by cracking down on minor offenses and flooding high-crime areas with police. The problem with these tactics, Lanier says, is that they alienate residents—who are also often victims and witnesses—and turn them against the police. And when you’re trying to focus on serious violent offenders, these strategies are not guaranteed to target the right people.

What’s more, DC’s police department has invested in new technologies, like closed-circuit television and body cameras for police, and has improved the quality and availability of crime data.

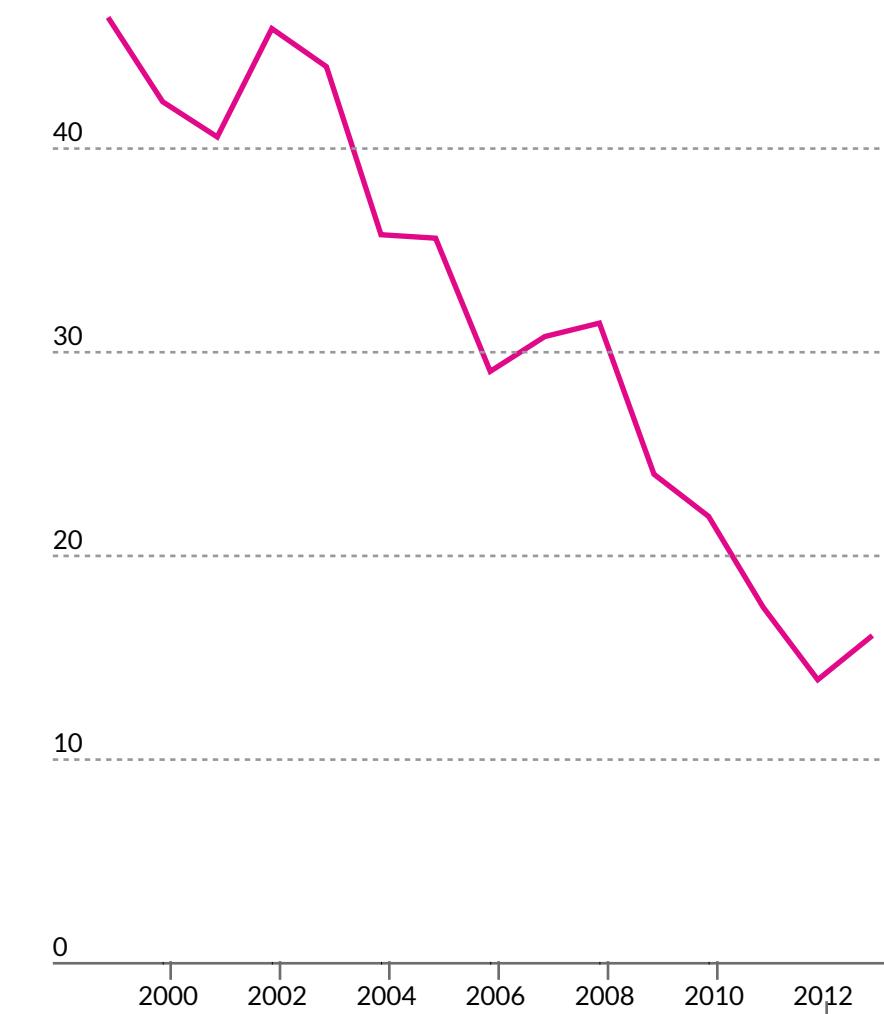
VIOLENT CRIME

Aggravated Assault Robbery



HOMICIDE

50 per 100,000 residents

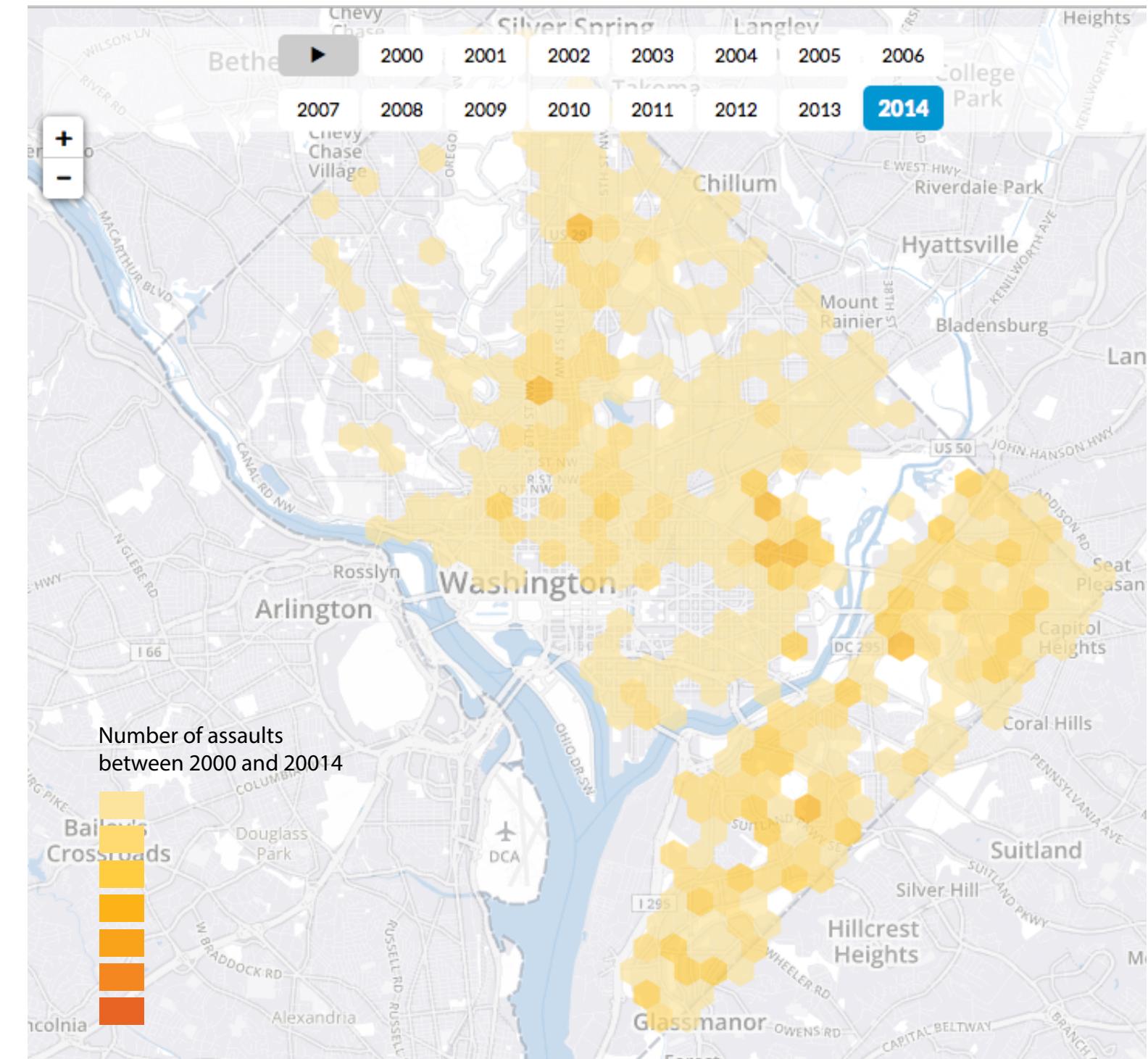




Aggravated assaults declined citywide, but remained high in Northeast and Southeast DC

Aggravated assaults are serious physical assaults, often involving a deadly weapon like a gun or knife. The rate of aggravated assaults per 100,000 people in DC fell significantly from 801 in 2000 to 576 in 2013.

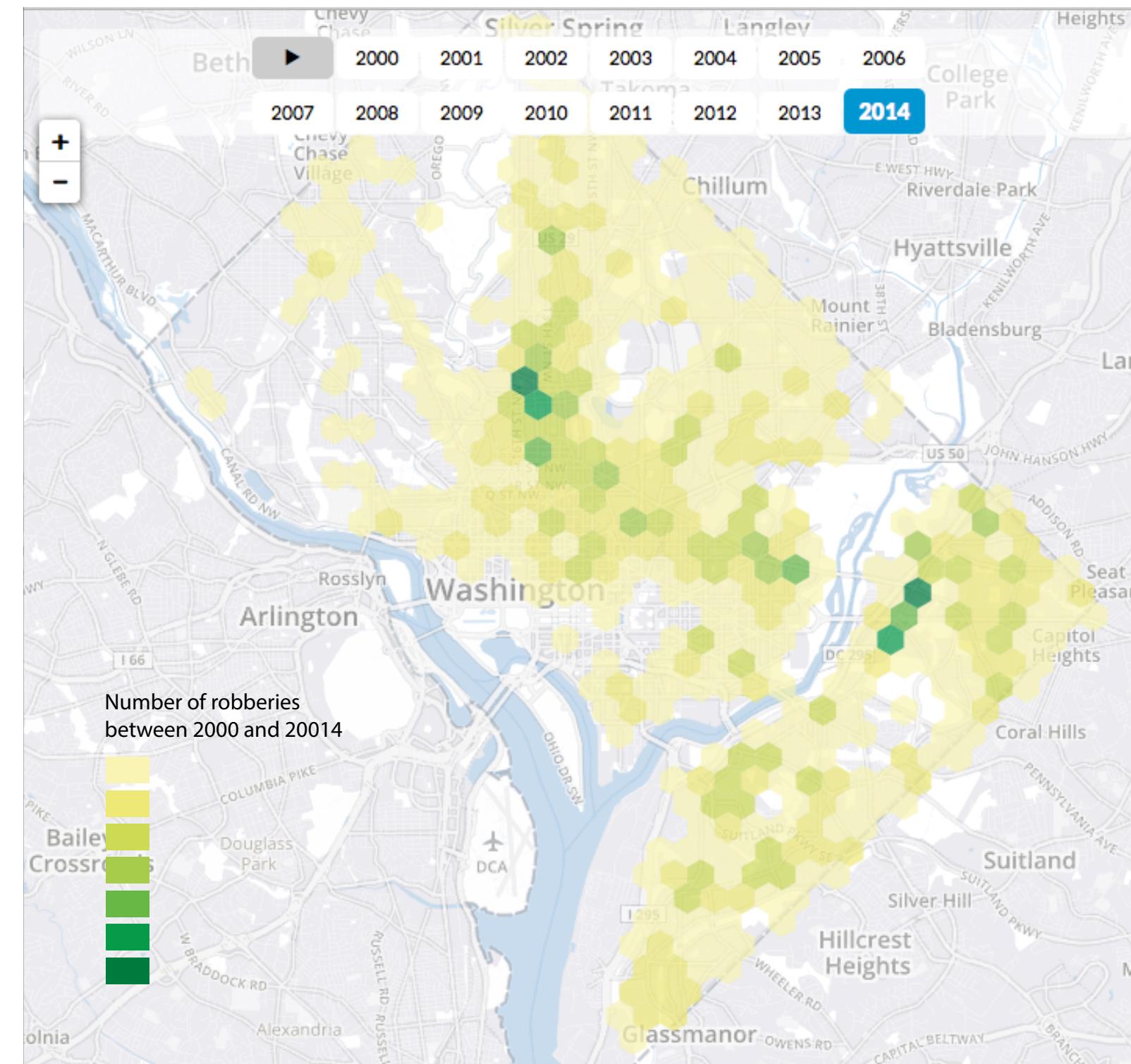
However, some areas had smaller declines, particularly in Trinidad, along the H Street Corridor, and in neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River. The population east of the river also remained fairly consistent during this period, meaning that increases (or a lack of decline) in the volume of crime can't be explained by an increase in the number of residents.





Robberies follow the trend of other violent crimes

Robberies followed roughly the same path as aggravated assaults, steadily declining in the city overall but remaining fairly stable in some parts of the District. Robberies, where the offender uses or threatens force, are considered violent crimes, while thefts like pickpocketing are not.

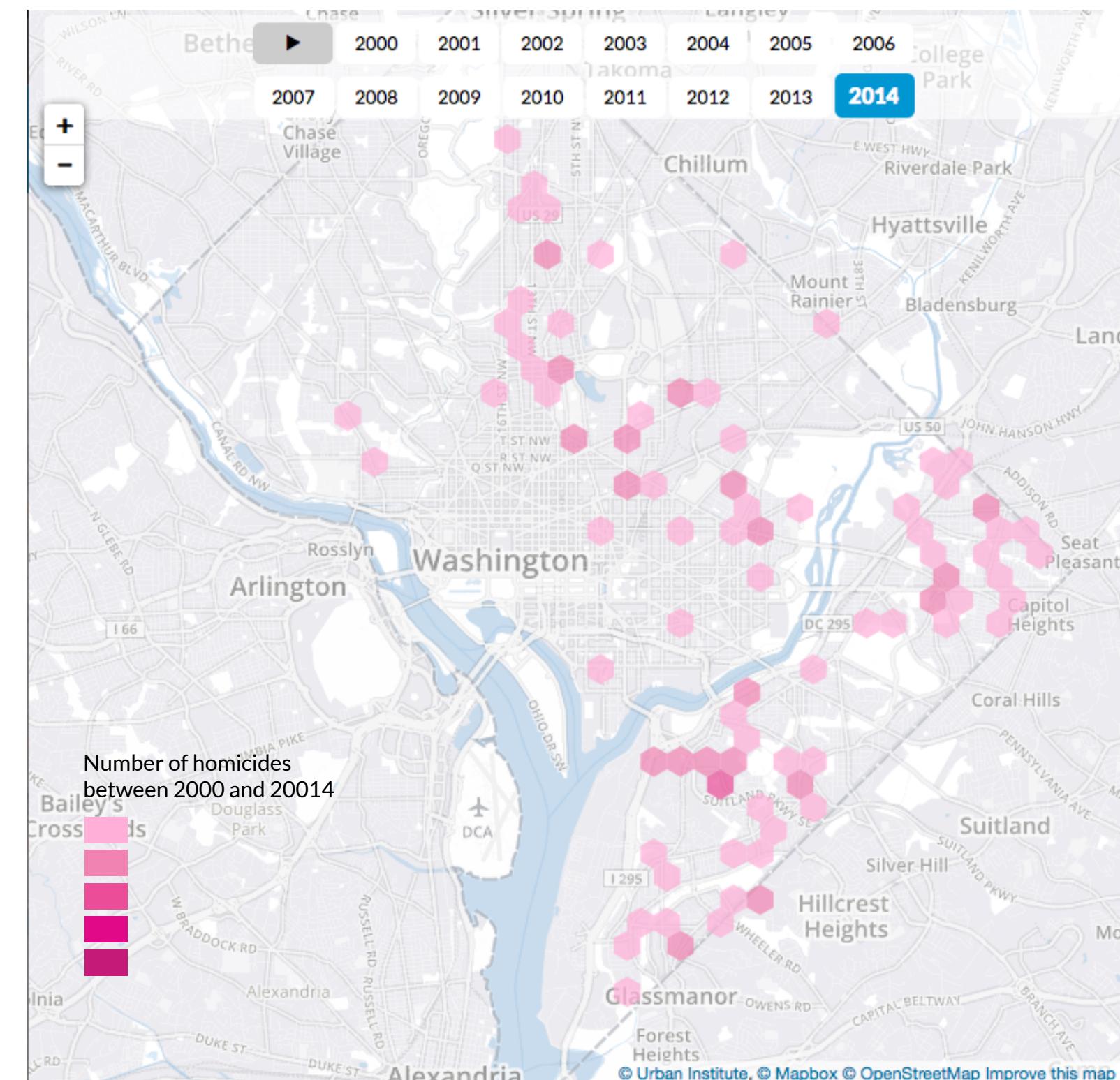




Homicides in DC hit record lows

In 2012, DC hit a record low of 88 homicides, down from a peak of 397 in 1996. Homicides have gone up slightly since then, hovering around 100 a year.

This dramatic drop in homicides stems from a number of factors, including economic growth, demographic changes, and improvements in policing strategies. Additionally, the decrease may reflect changes like better medical care and improved EMT response times, which play an important role in preventing deaths due to violence.





Which neighborhoods had the biggest decreases in violent crime?

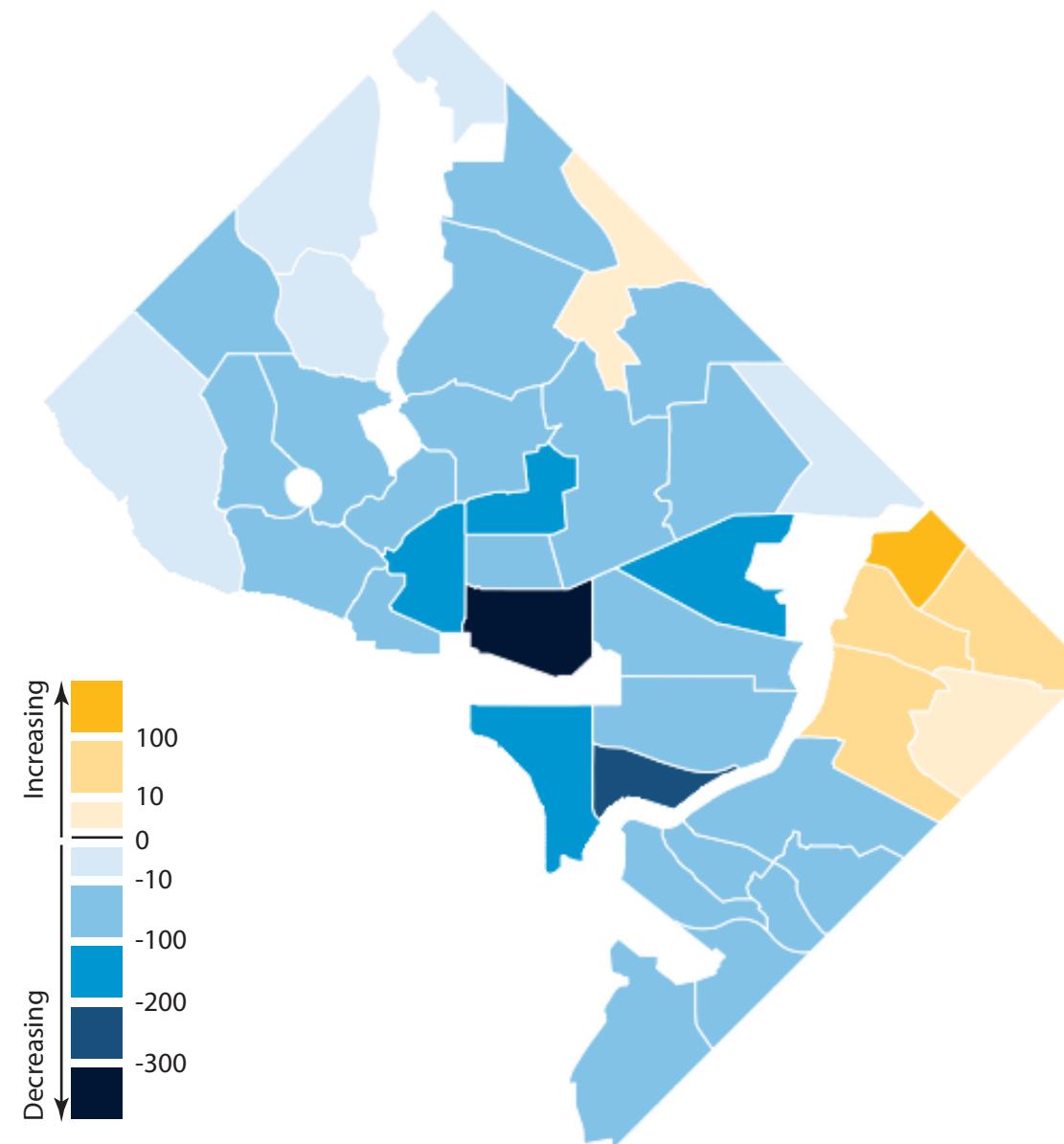
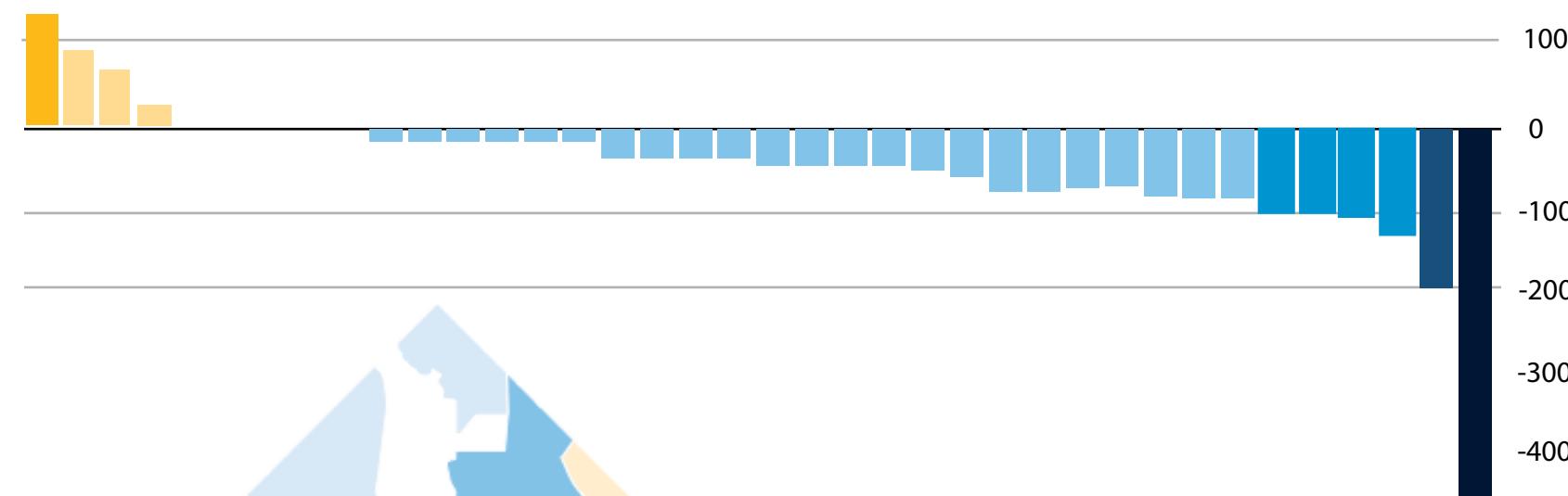
Looking at violent crime by neighborhood cluster, we can see that the biggest drop in crime occurred in the Chinatown/Penn Quarter area. From 2000 to 2014, the rate of violent crime fell from 63 crimes for every 1,000 residents to 17. The violent crime rate also fell considerably in the Navy Yard area, one of DC's fastest-growing neighborhoods.

During the same period, while crime was declining citywide, the violent crime rate increased slightly in four adjacent neighborhood clusters in Ward 7: Eastland Gardens/Kenilworth, Deanwood/Lincoln Heights, Mayfair/Hillbrook, and River Terrace/Benning.

Measuring crimes per residents allows us to compare neighborhoods of different sizes, but it's also important to note that these four Ward 7 neighborhoods have much smaller populations and lower raw crime numbers than Chinatown. For example, in 2014, the Kenilworth area had roughly 2,450 residents and experienced 63 violent crimes, while the Chinatown area was home to some 13,600 residents and experienced 234 violent crimes.

Many areas saw little to no change in the violent crime rate over the past 15 years. Stable crime levels can mean very different things. Several neighborhood clusters in upper northwest DC, for example, started out with a very low crime rate and have maintained it, while other neighborhoods have higher crime rates that remain unchanged.

CHANGE IN VIOLENT CRIME PER 10,000 RESIDENTS

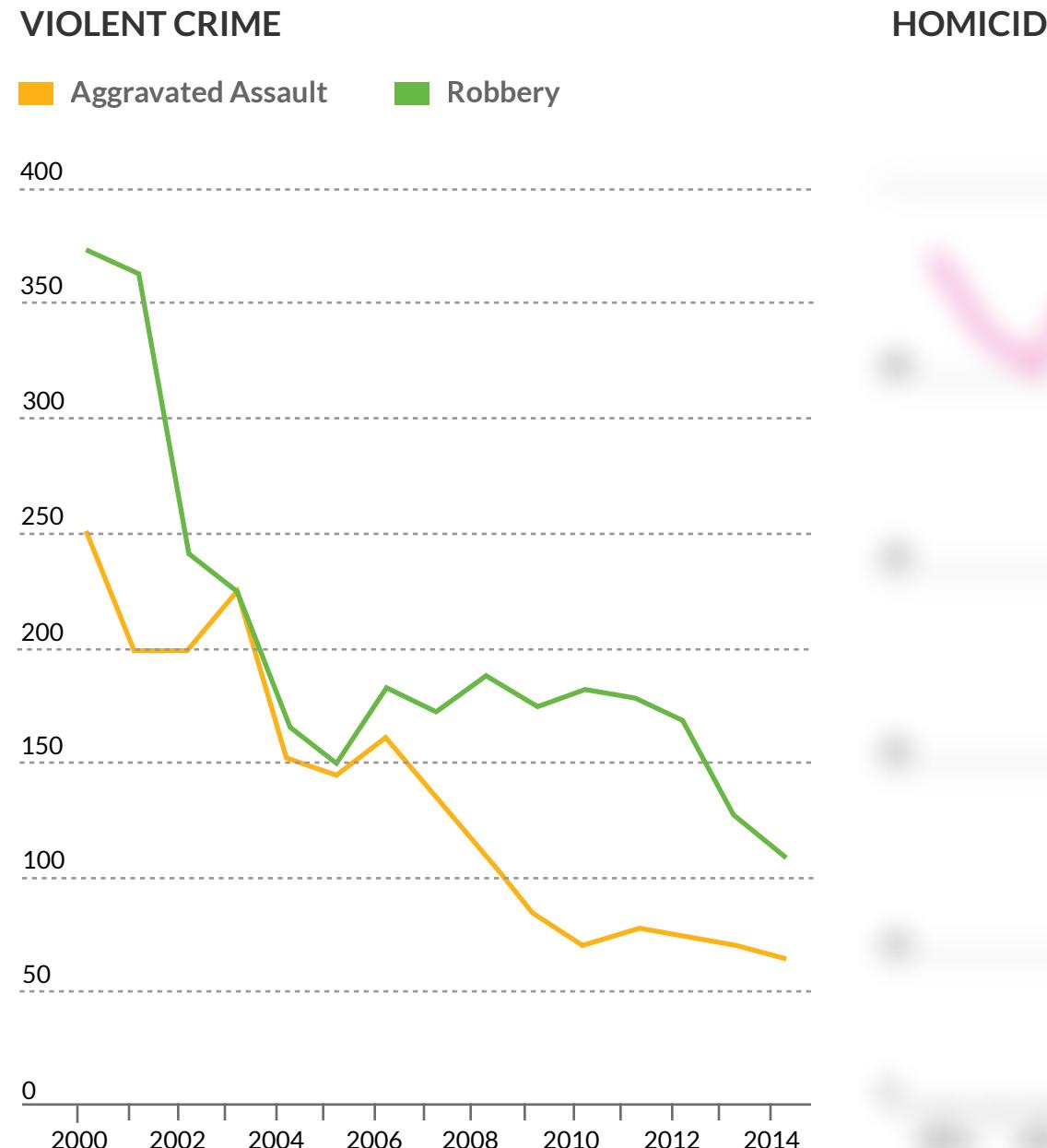




Zooming in: Chinatown/Penn Quarter

The number of violent crimes in the Chinatown/Penn Quarter neighborhood cluster (which includes downtown and Mt. Vernon Square) dropped more than 50 percent from 2000 to 2014, while the population grew from about 8,600 to 13,600 residents.

Since the MCI Center—now named the Verizon Center—opened in 1997, this area has gone through a significant transformation, with a surge of new residential and business development. That growth was likely one of a number of reasons crime dropped so dramatically. Increased activity may have made committing crimes more difficult, led to a higher police presence, or encouraged the delivery of better public services. There is also a feedback effect: the citywide drop in crime attracted more residents, encouraging growth and economic development. While Wards 2 and 3 still lead by a good margin, other wards are more spread out across the price spectrum now than in the 1990s.





Zooming in: Eastland Gardens/ Kenilworth

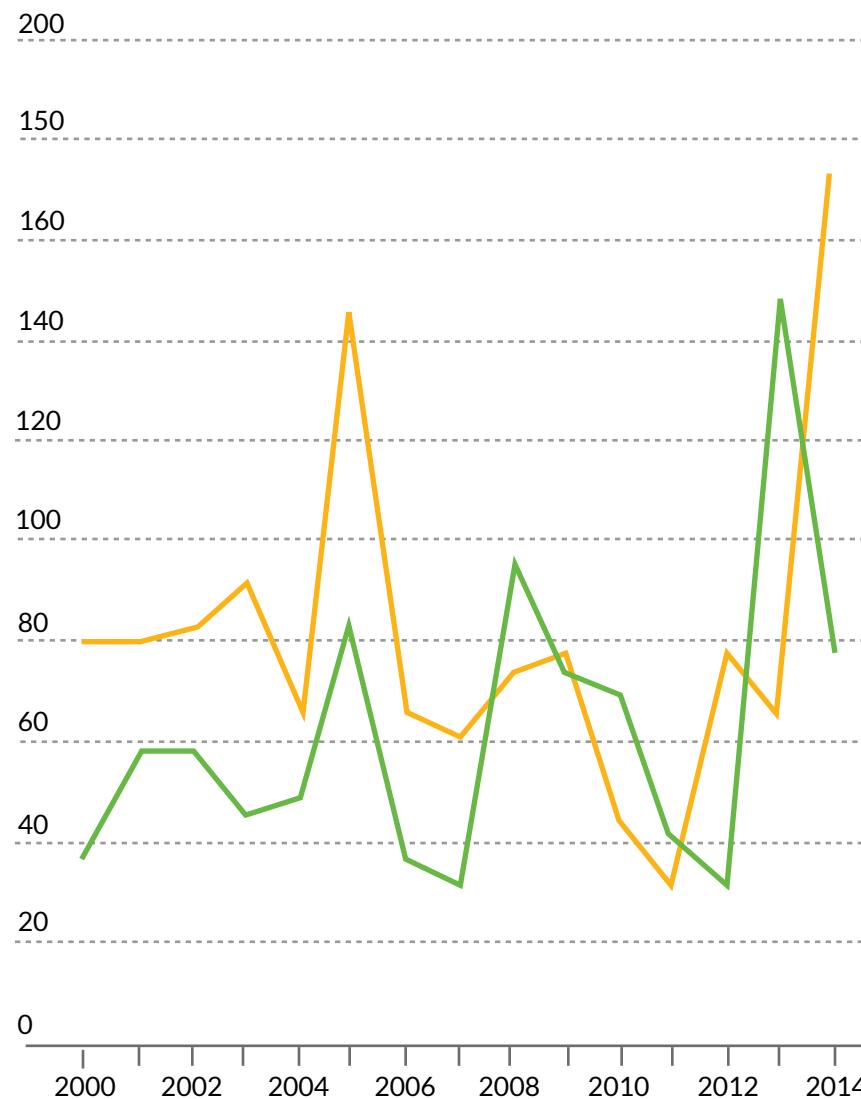
Violent crime rose slightly in Eastland Gardens/Kenilworth and three other neighborhood clusters in Ward 7. The increases have been small, but violent crime was already high in these areas and is concentrated in a few city blocks. These neighborhoods have not benefitted as fully from the Districtwide decline in crime, nor have they shared in the same economic growth as the rest of the city.

The Eastland Gardens and Kenilworth area has faced persistently high poverty and unemployment rates. It's also geographically cut off from the rest of the city by the Anacostia Freeway on the east and the Anacostia River to the west. Limited access to public transportation further isolates residents.

Federal investment may help this community move forward. In 2010, the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative, which works in Eastland Gardens and Kenilworth, received federal funding for an ambitious effort to provide cradle-to-career supports, such as afterschool programs and access to health care, for children and their families. The hope is that intensive social services will give the children and families in these neighborhoods the tools to build healthy, stable homes and careers.

VIOLENT CRIME

Aggravated Assault Robbery



HOMICIDE





Building on DC's public safety improvements will take more than policing alone

The crime-reduction strategies that have taken DC to this point won't be enough to take us the next level. Many of the remaining aggravated assaults and homicides involve issues like domestic violence, which cannot be addressed by policing alone. To tackle the new face of crime in DC, we'll need a holistic approach that involves social services, the police, nonprofits, and residents working together. Only by partnering can the city build healthier, safer communities—creating the social supports, stability, and opportunities that will bring down even the most persistent pockets of violent crime.

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