



The Smart Policing Initiative in the LAPD: An Evaluation of Operation LASER+ 2016

By

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Introduction

In 2016 LASER (Los Angeles' Strategic Enforcement and Restoration program) was implemented in eight (8) Divisions: 77th Street, Southeast, Southwest, and Newton (original four), and Harbor, Hollenbeck, Northeast, and Rampart (newly minted).

The success of LASER in the previous year (Swatt and Uchida, 2016) and Chief Charlie Beck's emphasis on data-driven policing led to the expansion of LASER in 2016. Selection of the four new divisions was based on their ranking in terms of violent crime and gun-related crime as well as their geographic locations in Central and South Bureaus of the Los Angeles Police Department.

Figure 1 shows the number of citywide violent crimes in 2015 and Figure 2 shows the number of citywide gun-related crimes in 2015. For the eight LASER Divisions, they rank in the top 12 (out of 21) for violent crime and are ranked in the top nine for gun-related crime..

Figure 1. Citywide Violent Crimes, 2015, LAPD Divisions

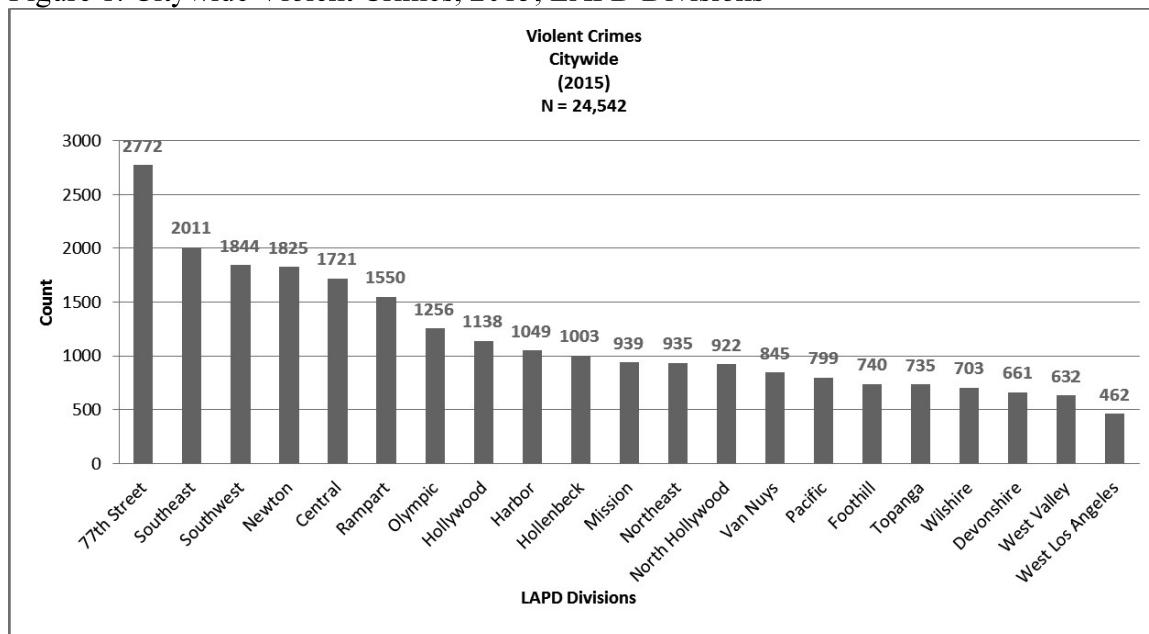
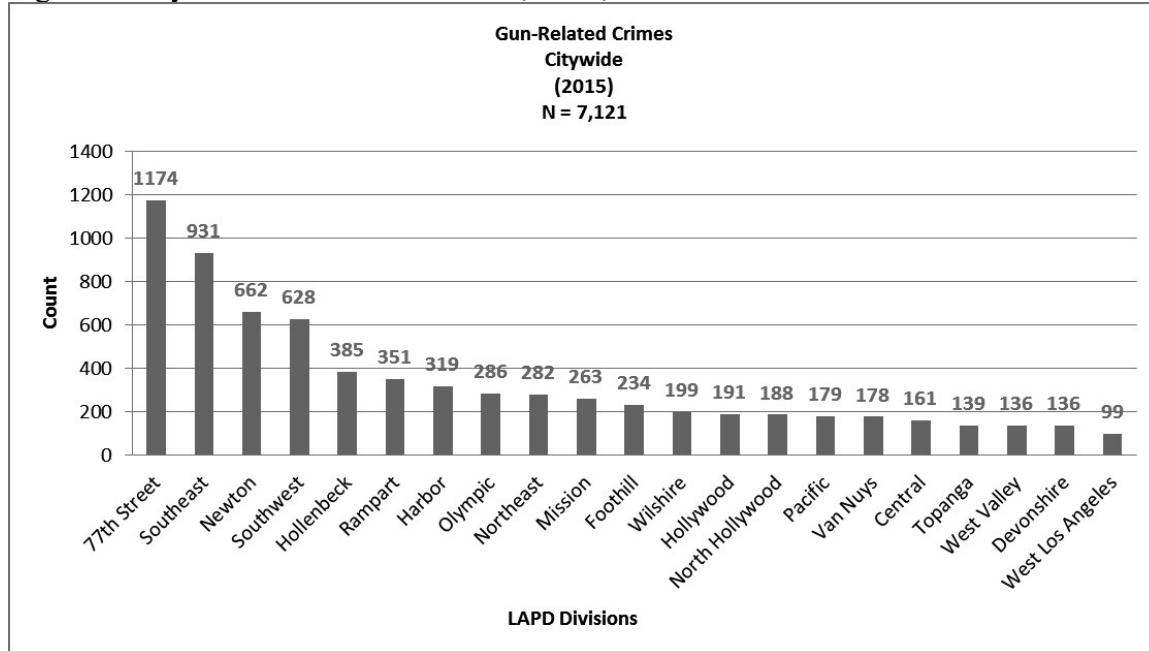


Figure 2. Citywide Gun-Related Crimes, 2015, LAPD Divisions



Each Division was required to:

- 1) Focus on violent crime (homicides, robberies, aggravated assaults, and shootings),
- 2) Identify specific individuals who would serve in the Crime Intelligence Detail (CID),
- 3) Identify chronic locations or LASER Zones,
- 4) Identify and target chronic offenders,
- 5) Maintain a constant presence and keep track of dosage in the Zones, and
- 6) Contact and monitor chronic offenders.

One to six LASER Zones were identified in each Division where violent and gun-related crimes were the highest. The Zones were based on historical crime data (i.e., violent crime from 2006-2015) and on the most recent three years (e.g., 2013-2015). This means that LASER focused on the highest concentration of violent crimes in the city of Los Angeles. (Maps are provided for each Division in the Appendix).

The zones remained the same for at least twelve months and patrol officers were deployed to them every week. In addition, CIDs identified 12 to 25 Chronic Violent Offenders within their Divisions.

Then-Commander Dennis Kato (now Deputy Chief), the Justice & Security Strategies team, and a core team of analysts (civilian and police) oversaw the activities of the LASER Divisions and provided training, technical assistance, and advice on how-to implement the program.

Implementation

Because of the rapid uptick in violent crime from November 2015 to February 2016, the Community Safety Operations Center (CSOC) was established to facilitate, coordinate, monitor, and directly assist Captains with reducing homicides and shootings and to implement LASER.

Deputy Chief Kato served as the commanding officer for CSOC. Every morning at 10 am he convened a conference call with Deputy Chiefs, Commanders, Captains, and Lieutenants from 77th Street, Southwest, Southeast, and Newton Divisions to coordinate activities for the day. In addition to the four geographic areas, Deputy Chief Kato could use resources from the Metropolitan Division, Traffic Division, and the Community Relationships Division to respond to and prevent violent crimes from occurring in specific locations. Prior to the conference calls sworn and non-sworn crime analysts would analyze data to determine where and when appropriate resources would be placed. Investigators would also provide information about prior violent or gun-related crimes that would assist in deployment of officers.

The conference calls took place each day, six days per week (except Sundays), for six months.

CSOC was tasked with the following:

- 1) Increase the sense of urgency in LAPD to act on violent crime and victimizations
- 2) Staff CSOC with analysts and liaisons from the Bureaus and Divisions
- 3) Focus on chronic locations and chronic offenders.
- 4) Assign daily missions to Metro, Community Relationships Division, motors, gang units, narcotics units, and other special units to focus on violent crime (especially homicides, shootings, and aggravated assaults) in specific areas and against specific people.
- 5) Rely on a data-driven approach: information gathering, analysis, dissemination of intelligence that link gangs to their factions and sets.
- 6) Establish the expectation that the intelligence collected and disseminated will be used to proactively prevent escalating gang violence and associated retaliations.
- 7) Actively promote inter-Bureau and inter-Divisional efforts by working in a coordinated manner.

Results of CSOC and LASER in 77th, Southeast, Southwest, and Newton

CSOC and LASER **succeeded** in maintaining the same number of homicides and shooting victims in the four areas compared to 2015. This is a 'success' because CSOC stemmed the rising tide of violence that we witnessed in January and February of 2016. By following the tasks outlined above, CSOC mitigated an alarmingly high rate of homicides and shootings that was foreseen for 2016.

Taken as a whole, as of December 31, 2016 homicides in the four areas decreased by 4.7% when compared to 2015 numbers (123 v 129). Similarly, the number of victims shot decreased by nearly 8% (583 v 633), though the number of shots fired increased by 8.2% (1,236 v. 1,142).

In three of the four Divisions (77th Street, Southeast and Newton), homicides and shooting victims decreased compared to 2015. Southwest saw an increase in homicides, shooting victims, and shots fired. It appears that violence among gangs was the primary reason for the increase in Southwest.

In addition to the homicides, shootings, and shooting victims, we examined whether LASER had an effect on overall violent crimes. Table 1 shows the four CSOC Divisions and the four new Divisions. In six of eight Divisions violent crime increased from 2015 to 2016.

For CSOC Divisions, violent crime increased to some degree in the LASER zones, but the rate of increase was much lower than the rest of the division. For example, in Southwest, violent crime increased by 13.25%, but in the LASER Zones violent crime increased by 5.31%. Similar results occurred in 77th (17.1% increase division-wide v. 7.19% in the LASER Zones), Southeast (13.78% v. 6.59%), and Newton (10.99% to 2.08%).

We also examined the LASER Zones themselves within each of the four divisions. We found the following based on comparing data from 2015 to 2016:

- Southwest: violent crime increased from 471 to 496 (5.31%); three of six Zones saw reductions in violence
- 77th: violent crime increased from 751 to 805 (7.19%); all three zones saw increases in violence
- Southeast: violent crime increased from 258 to 275 (6.59%); two of three zones saw decreases in violence
- Newton: violent crime increased from 292 to 301 (3.08%); two of three zones saw slight increases.

Results of LASER in Harbor, Hollenbeck, Northeast, and Rampart

Implementation of LASER in Harbor, Hollenbeck, Northeast and Rampart also showed success. The data show that LASER interventions had an effect within three of the four new Divisions.

Table 1 shows the differences between division-wide violent crime and LASER Zone violent crime. Northeast and Harbor Divisions showed the largest differences. Northeast experienced an overall drop of -0.73% in violent crime and -20.4% decrease in the LASER Zones. In Harbor, the Division showed an increase of 13.6% but a decrease of 7.10% in the LASER Zones. In Rampart, the division showed an overall decrease in violent crime (-3.75%) with the LASER Zone showing a slight increase. Lastly,

Hollenbeck showed a 24.11% increase in violent crime, but a -2.5% decrease in the LASER Zones.

Table 1. Violent Crime Comparisons, By Divisions and LASER Zones, 2015-2016

Division	Total 2015 VC	Total 2016 VC	% change	2015 LASER Zones VC	2016 LASER Zones VC	% Change
Southwest	1954	2213	13.25%	471	496	5.31%
77th Street	2878	3370	17.10%	751	805	7.19%
Southeast	2098	2387	13.78%	258	275	6.59%
Newton	1892	2100	10.99%	292	301	3.08%
Northeast	960	953	-0.73%	191	152	-20.42%
Hollenbeck	1041	1292	24.11%	89	87	-2.25%
Rampart	1627	1566	-3.75%	425	431	1.41%
Harbor	1066	1211	13.60%	169	157	-7.10%

More specifically, we found the following within the LASER Zones:

- Northeast: violent crime decreased from 191 to 152 (-20.42%); decreases occurred in all three Zones
- Hollenbeck: violent crime decreased from 89 to 87 (-2.25%); one of the three Zones accounted for the increase
- Rampart: violent crime increased from 425 to 431 (1.41%) in the one LASER Zone (MacArthur Park area and surroundings).
- Harbor: violent crime decreased from 169 to 157 (-7.10%); two of three zones saw decreases.

Overall, it appears that LASER had an effect on violent crime in these four new divisions as violent decreased in the targeted areas.

Recommendations

Based on the results from the CSOC areas and first-year LASER divisions we recommend the following:

1. Continue CSOC as an over-arching component of the effort to reduce violent crime in the City.
2. Expand the CSOC concept to Central Bureau.
3. Ensure that members of the Crime Intelligence Details are fully trained in CAMS, Palantir, creating chronic offender bulletins, and in developing weekly missions in the LASER Zones.
4. Institutionalize the use of data from Automated Vehicle Locators (AVL) to measure dosage. Using AVL data will increase the accuracy of dosage in the LASER Zones and alleviate CIDs from doing this 'by hand.'
5. Add four more divisions to the LASER program on a rolling basis. Foothill, Hollywood, Mission, and Olympic have been selected for 2017.
6. The Chief announced in January 2017 that the primary focus for the Department is the reduction of crime related to gun violence. As such we should focus on shooting victims, repeat locations of gun-related crime and drive-by shootings, and 'serial shooters.'

References

Swatt, M. L. and Uchida, C.D. (2016). *The Smart Policing Initiative in the LAPD: An Evaluation of Operation LASER*. Interim Report to the LAPD. Silver Spring, MD: Justice & Security Strategies, Inc.

Southwest LASER Zones and Violent Crime 2015-2016 Comparisons

Violent Crime Comparisons, By Divisions and LASER Zones, 2015-2016

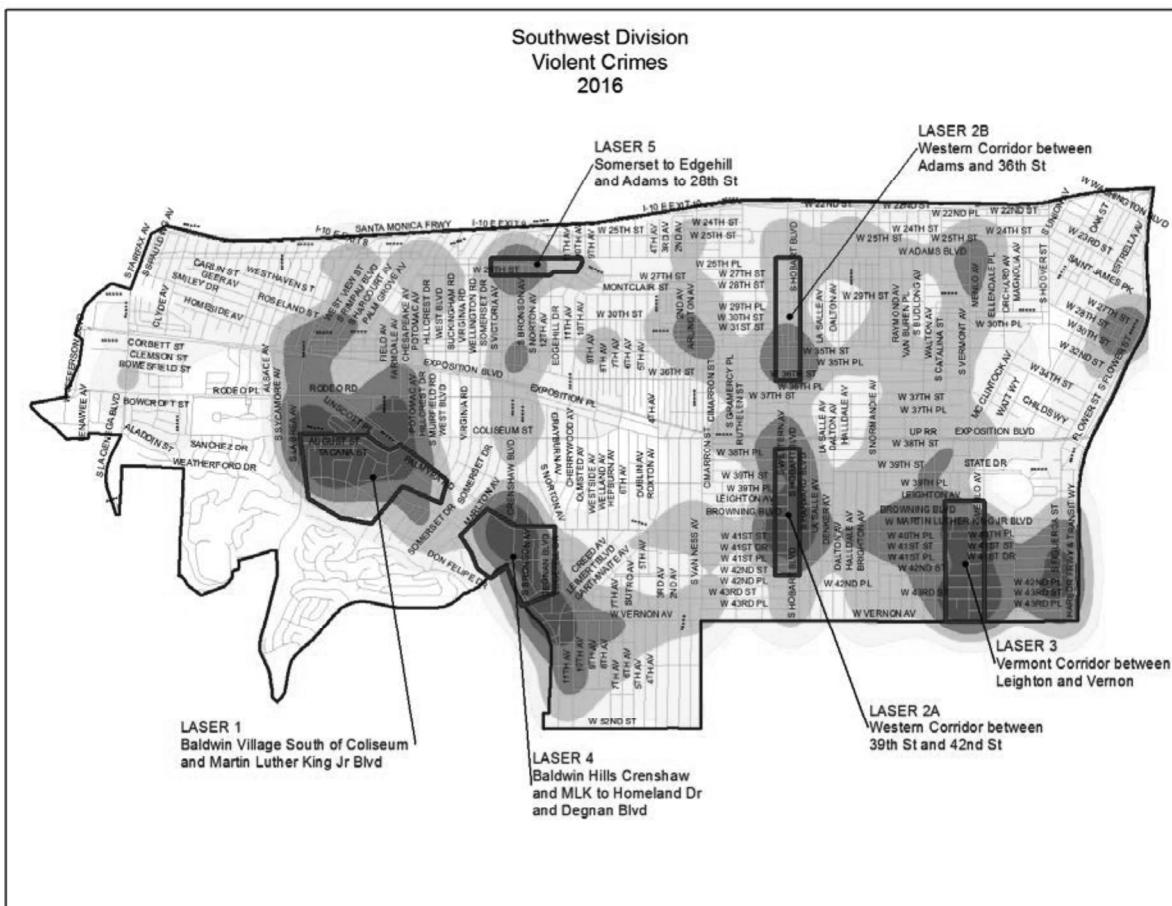
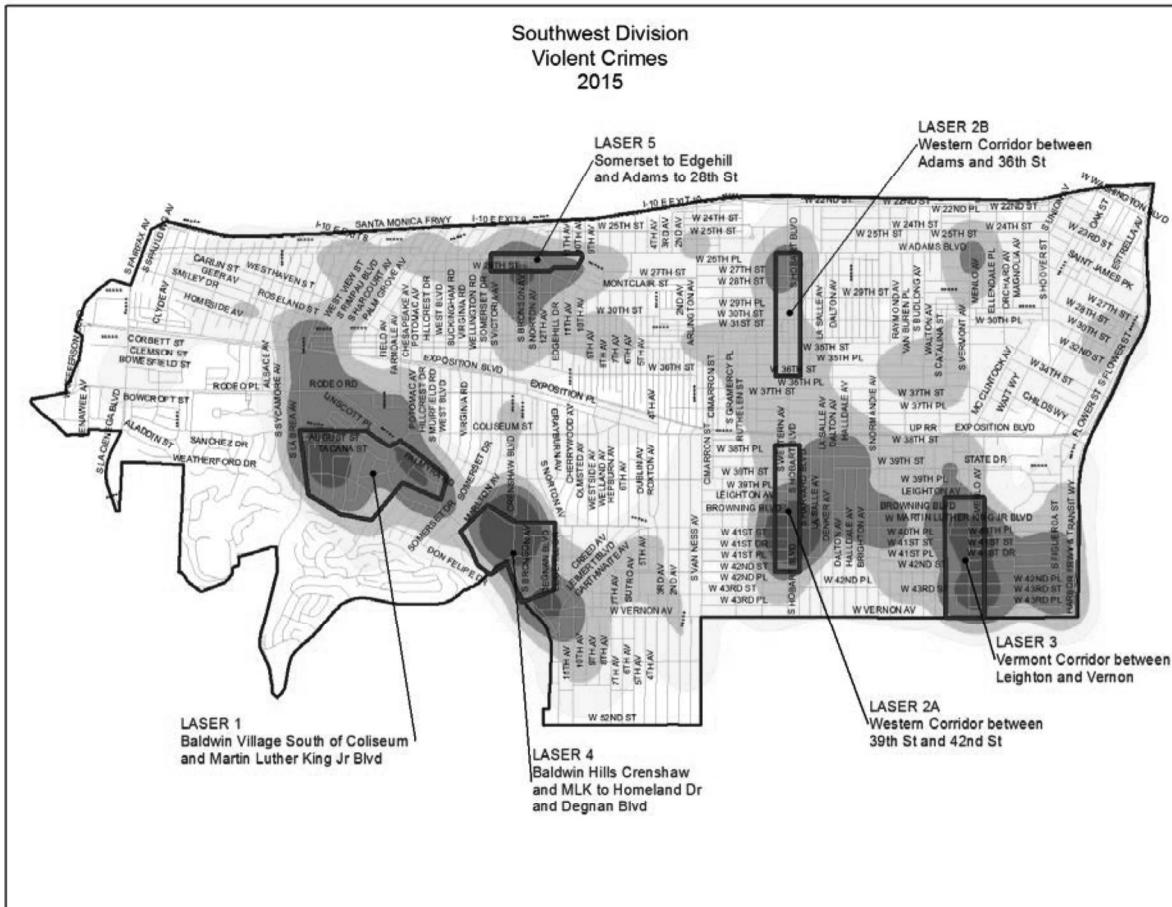
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Violent crime has increased throughout the city in 2016 when compared to 2015. Most of the LASER divisions also experienced an increase in violent crime. Although the LASER Zones showed an increase in violent crime, the rate was not as high when compared to the division as a whole.

Violent Crime in Southwest LASER Zones, 2015 and 2016

Southwest			
Corridor	2015	2016	% Change
SOW LASER1	151	169	11.92%
SOW LASER2A	71	80	12.68%
SOW LASER2B	36	46	27.78%
SOW LASER3	73	82	12.33%
SOW LASER4	113	98	-13.27%
SOW LASER5	27	21	-22.22%
All Zones	471	496	5.31%

Most of the LASER Zones saw an increase in violent crime with the exception of LASER Zones 4 and 5.



77th Street LASER Zones and Violent Crime 2015-2016 Comparisons

Violent Crime Comparisons, By Divisions and LASER Zones, 2015-2016

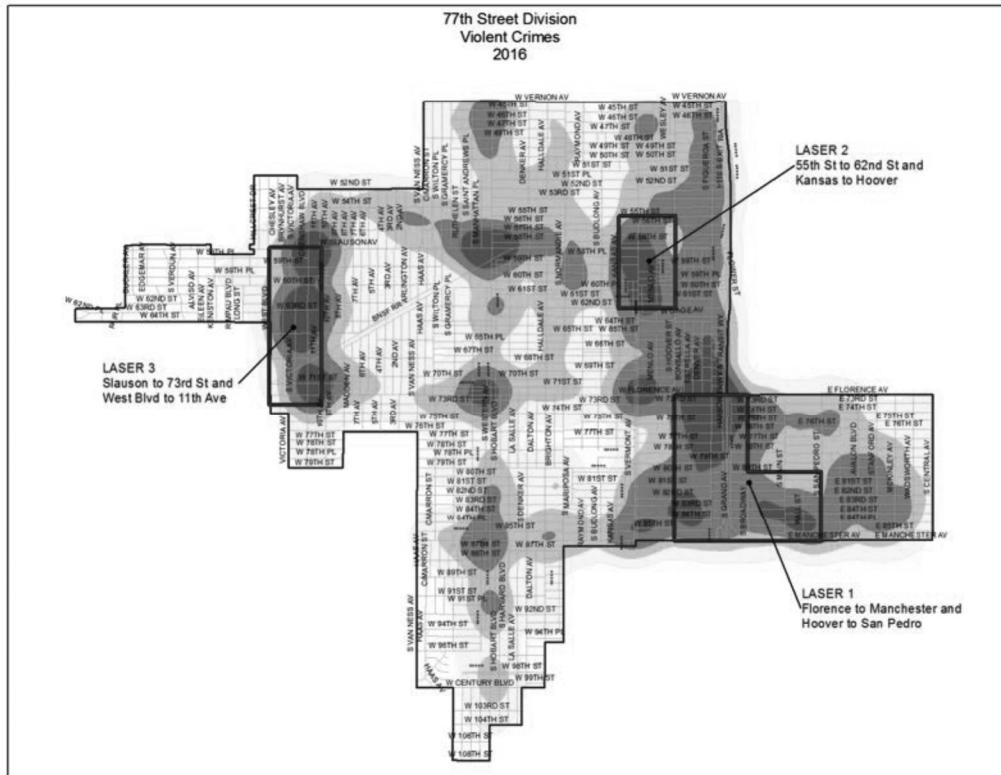
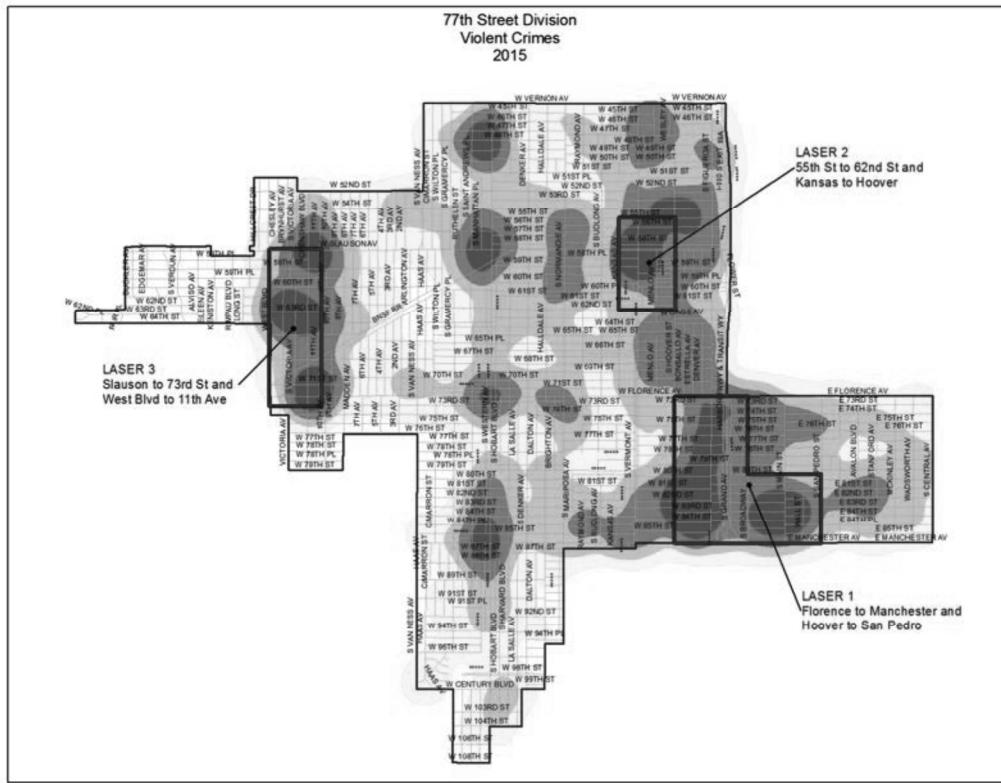
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Violent Crime in 77th Street LASER Zones, 2015 and 2016

77th Street			
Corridor	2015	2016	% Change
SST LASER1	399	427	7.02%
SST LASER2	130	127	-2.31%
SST LASER3	222	251	13.06%
All Zones	751	805	7.19%

LASER Zones 1 and 3 showed increases in violent crime while Zone 2 showed a slight decrease in violent crime.



Southeast LASER Zones and Violent Crime 2015-2016 Comparisons

Violent Crime Comparisons, By Divisions and LASER Zones, 2015-2016

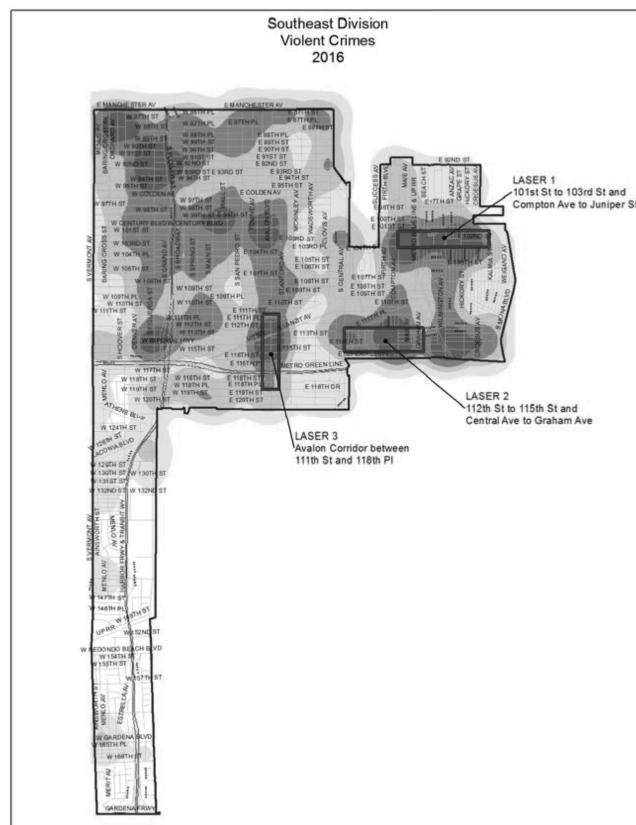
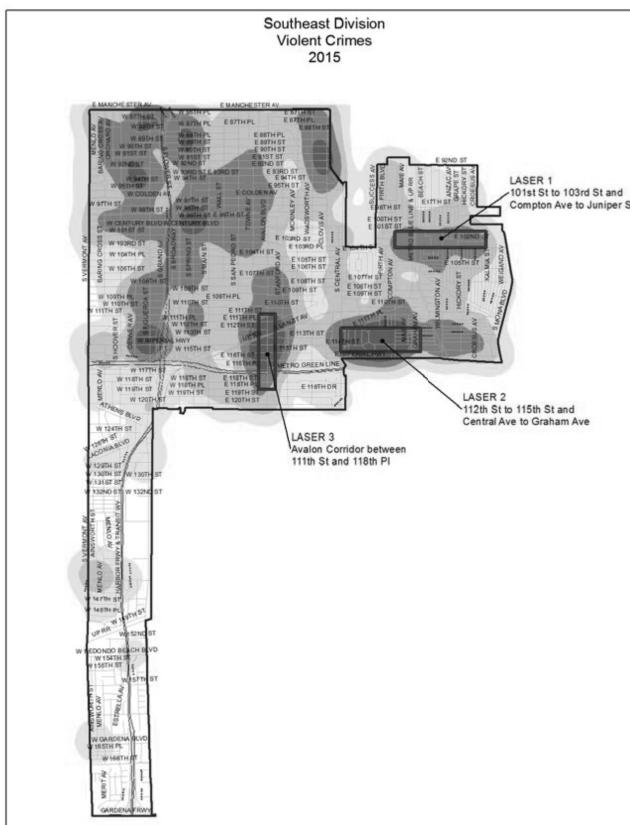
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Violent Crime in Southeast LASER Zones, 2015 and 2016

Southeast			
Corridor	2015	2016	% Change
SOE LASER1	65	106	63.08%
SOE LASER2	118	89	-24.58%
SOE LASER3	75	80	6.67%
All Zones	258	275	6.59%

LASER Zones 1 and 3 showed increases in violent crime while Zone 2 showed a decrease in violent crime.



Newton LASER Zones and Violent Crime 2015-2016 Comparisons

Violent Crime Comparisons, By Divisions and LASER Zones, 2015-2016

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Violent Crime in Newton LASER Zones, 2015 and 2016

Newton			
Corridor	2015	2016	% Change
NWT LASER1	81	79	-2.47%
NWT LASER2	106	114	7.55%
NWT LASER3	105	108	2.86%
All Zones	292	301	3.08%

LASER Zones 2 and 3 showed a slight increase in violent crime whereas LASER 1 showed a slight decrease.



Northeast LASER Zones and Violent Crime 2015-2016 Comparisons

Violent Crime Comparisons, By Divisions and LASER Zones, 2015-2016

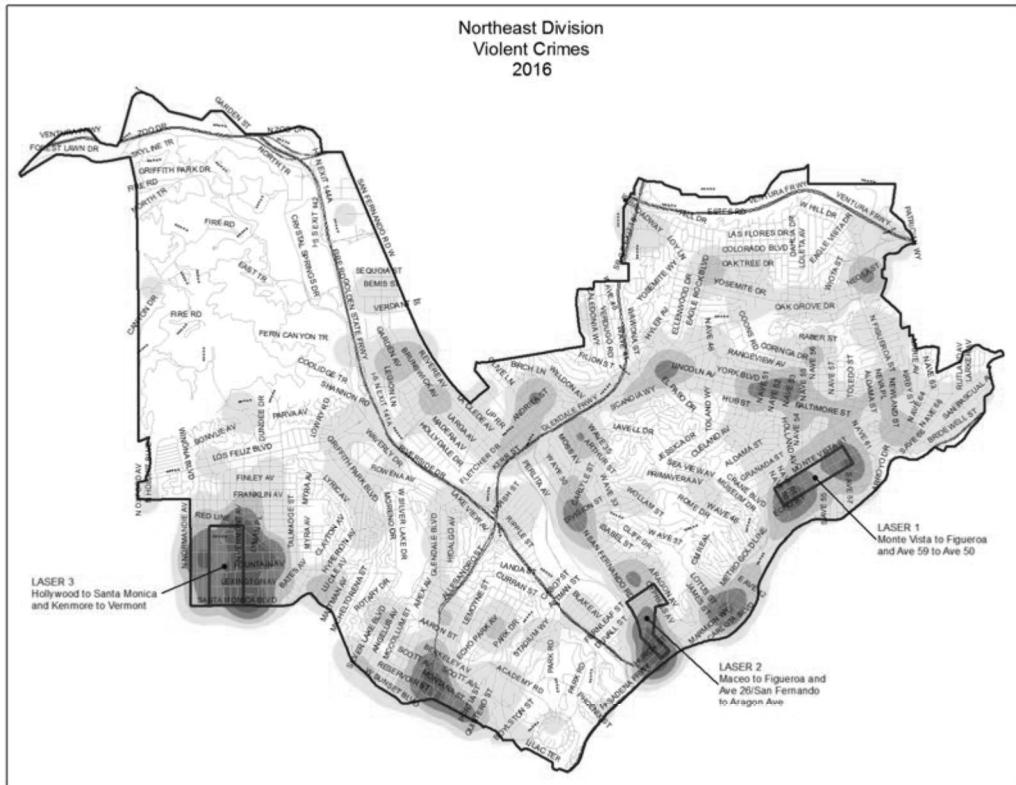
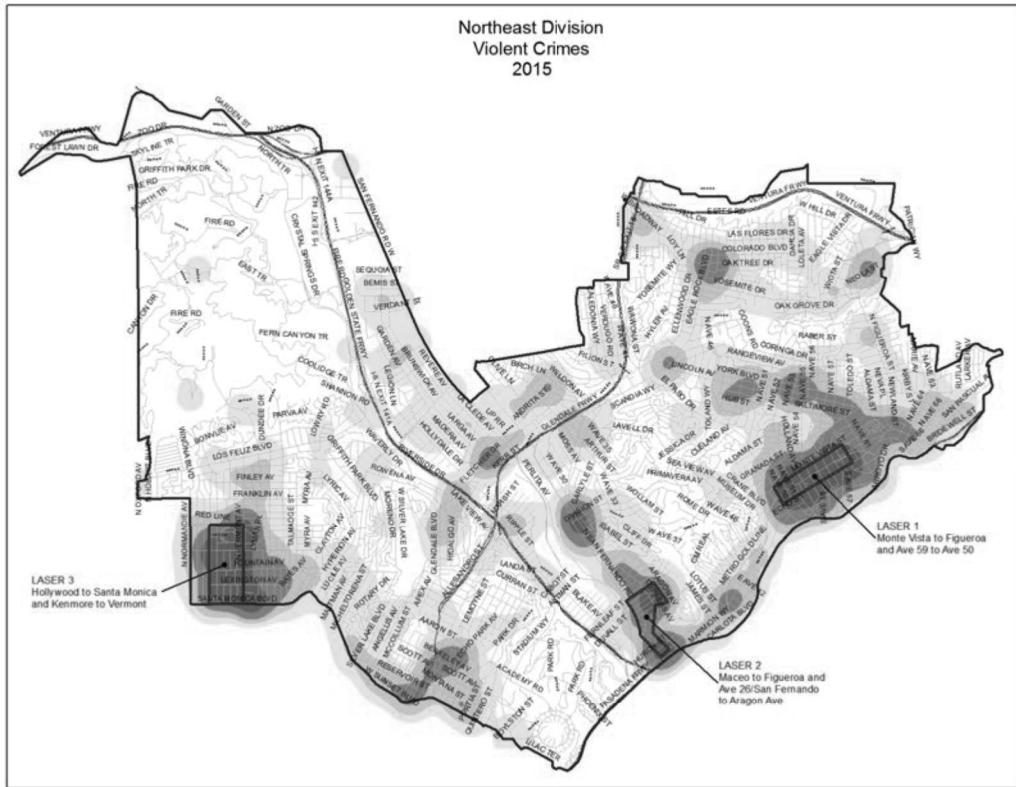
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Violent crime has increased throughout the city in 2016 when compared to 2015. Most of the LASER divisions also experienced an increase in violent crime, but Northeast is an exception. Northeast showed a slight decrease in violent crime division-wide and a 20.42% decrease in violent crime within its LASER Zones.

Violent Crime in Northeast LASER Zones, 2015 and 2016

Northeast			
Corridor	2015	2016	% Change
NOE LASER1	49	33	-32.65%
NOE LASER2	43	34	-20.93%
NOE LASER3	99	85	-14.14%
All Zones	191	152	-20.42%

All of the LASER Zones showed a decrease in violent crime.



Hollenbeck LASER Zones and Violent Crime 2015-2016 Comparisons

Violent Crime Comparisons, By Divisions and LASER Zones, 2015-2016

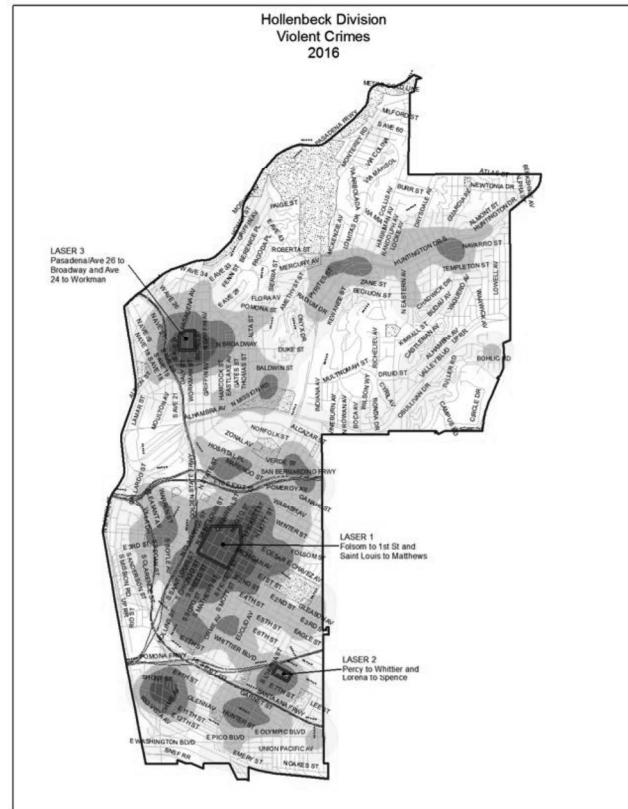
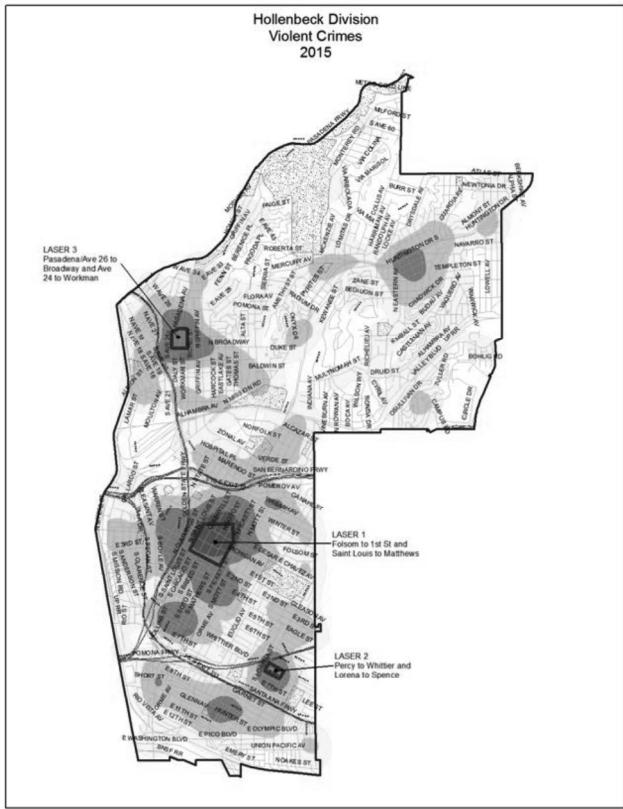
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Violent Crime in Hollenbeck LASER Zones, 2015 and 2016

Hollenbeck			
Corridor	2015	2016	% Change
HBK LASER1	60	62	3.33%
HBK LASER2	13	8	-38.46%
HBK LASER3	16	17	6.25%
All Zones	89	87	-2.25%

LASER Zones 1 and 3 showed slight increases in violent crime whereas LASER 2 showed a reasonable decrease.



Rampart LASER Zones and Violent Crime 2015-2016 Comparisons

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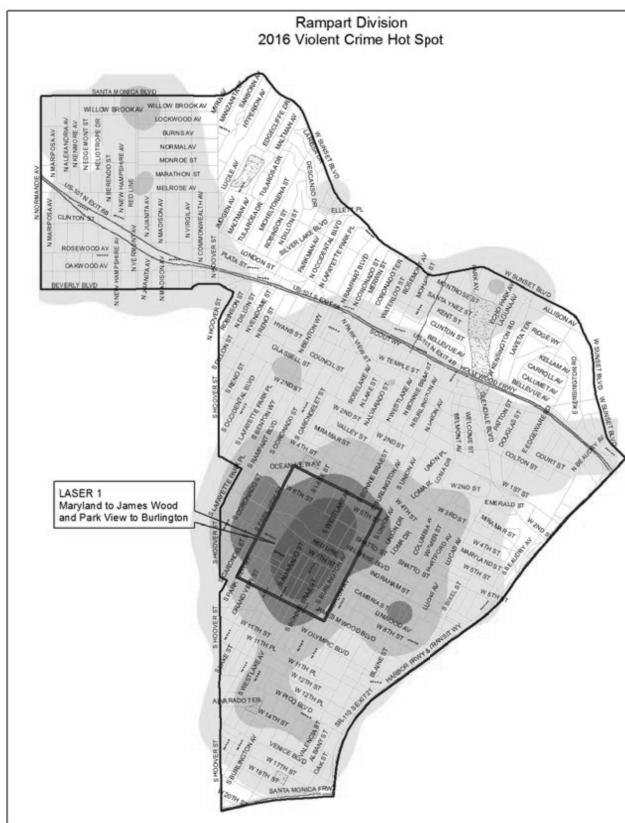
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Violent Crime in Rampart LASER Zone, 2015 and 2016

Rampart			
Corridor	2015	2016	% Change
RMP LASER1	425	431	1.41%

LASER Zones 1 showed a slight increase in violent crime.



Harbor LASER Zones and Violent Crime 2015-2016 Comparisons

Violent Crime Comparisons, By Divisions and LASER Zones, 2015-2016

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Violent Crime in Harbor LASER Zones, 2015 and 2016

Harbor			
Corridor	2015	2016	% Change
HRB LASER1	79	72	-8.86%
HRB LASER2	65	75	15.38%
HRB LASER3	25	10	-60.00%
All Zones	169	157	-7.10%

LASER Zones 1 and 3 show a decrease in violent crime whereas LASER 2 an increase in violent crime.

