

**Safe Neighborhoods.  
Safe Community.**

# Memphis Shelby Crime Commission

2019 Annual Report

# Introduction

A non-profit, private corporation governed by a diverse 50-member board of directors, the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission is the leading community-based entity focused on public safety. It has created unprecedented partnerships with businesses, schools, neighborhood organizations, public safety agencies and local violence prevention organizations working to make Memphis and Shelby County a safer place.

A key part of fulfilling the Crime Commission's mission is to spearhead development of the Safe Community Plan to significantly improve public safety in the Memphis area, galvanize diverse leaders and stakeholders in the implementation and support of the plan, monitor progress toward implementation, and measure the plan's impact. It is not a government plan. Neither is it a Crime Commission plan. Rather, it is a community-based and community-driven plan developed with input from 400-500 involved citizens.

The non-profit design of the Crime Commission provides much more flexibility in strategic thinking and development of collaborations among diverse organizations, sheltered to a large extent from the periodic changes in political administrations.

Launched in 2017, the current Safe Community Plan is composed of five key goals and sixteen objectives. It is an ambitious but realistic plan to dramatically reduce crime in the Memphis community. District Attorney Amy Weirich chairs the overall implementation effort.

We hope this Annual Report will help you learn more about the Crime Commission and the Safe Community Plan. To learn even more, visit <https://memphiscrime.org/>

## Mission Statement

**The Memphis Shelby Crime Commission seeks to improve public safety in the Memphis and Shelby County community by identifying and promoting evidence-based and evidence-informed best practices.**

# 2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ben C. Adams, Jr., Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC;  
Crime Commission Board Chair  
Louis “Bo” Allen, First Horizon Bank  
James (Jim) Baker, Owen Brennan’s Restaurant  
Melanie Blakeney, Marx-Bensdorf Realtors  
Jerry Blum, AutoZone  
Sheriff Floyd Bonner, Shelby County Government  
Vinessa Brown, LifeLine to Success  
Judge John Campbell, TN State Government  
Tom Campbell, Consultant  
Dave Carlson, Smith & Nephew  
Kevin Clarkson, CB Richard Ellis  
Thomas Cleves, International Paper  
Chief Gerald Darling, Shelby County Schools  
David Dart, ServiceMaster  
Representative John Deberry, TN State Government  
Rob DelPriore, Mid-America Properties  
John Dudas, Belz Enterprises  
U. S. Attorney Mike Dunavant, United States Government  
Ryan Ehrhart, Raymond James  
Mayor Lee Harris, Shelby County Government  
Terry Harris, Federal Express Corporation  
Jeffrey Higgs, Lemoyne-Owen College Community Development Corp.  
Henry Hooper II, State Farm Insurance  
Larry Jensen, Commercial Advisors  
Rev. James Kirkwood, Memphis Christian Pastors Network  
Pierce Ledbetter, LEDIC Management. Group, LLC  
Mayor Keith McDonald, City of Bartlett Government  
Judge Dan Michael, Shelby County Government  
Commissioner Amber Mills, Shelby County Government  
Johnny Moore, Jr., SunTrust Bank, Memphis  
Stevie Moore, Freedom From Unnecessary Negatives (F.F.U.N.)  
Paul Morris, Jack Morris Auto Glass  
FBI SAC Mo Myers, United States Government  
Rev. Keith Norman, First Baptist Church – Broad  
Mayor Mike Palazzolo, City of Germantown TN  
TDOC Commissioner Tony Parker, TN State Government  
MPD Director Michael Rallings, City of Memphis Government  
TBI Director David Rausch, TN State Government  
Judge Gerald Skahan, Shelby County Government  
Carol Ross-Spang, Methodist LeBonheur Healthcare  
David M. Slott, American Residential Services  
Mayor Jim Strickland, City of Memphis Government  
Councilman Jamita Swearngen, City of Memphis Government  
Blair Taylor, Memphis Tomorrow  
Coleman Thompson, Pyramid Recovery Center  
Dr. K. B. Turner, University of Memphis  
Daniel Weddle, ProTech Services Group, Inc.  
District Attorney Amy Weirich, TN State Government;  
Safe Community Plan Chair  
Craig Weiss, Central Defense Security/Tower Ventures  
Dorcas Young-Griffin, Shelby County Government



## Staff



**Bill Gibbons**  
President and PSI  
Executive Director



**Linda Russell**  
Vice President,  
Communications and  
Development, and PSI  
Executive Assistant



**Sharon (Sam) Walker**  
Executive Assistant



**Abby Wilkerson**  
Special Assistant



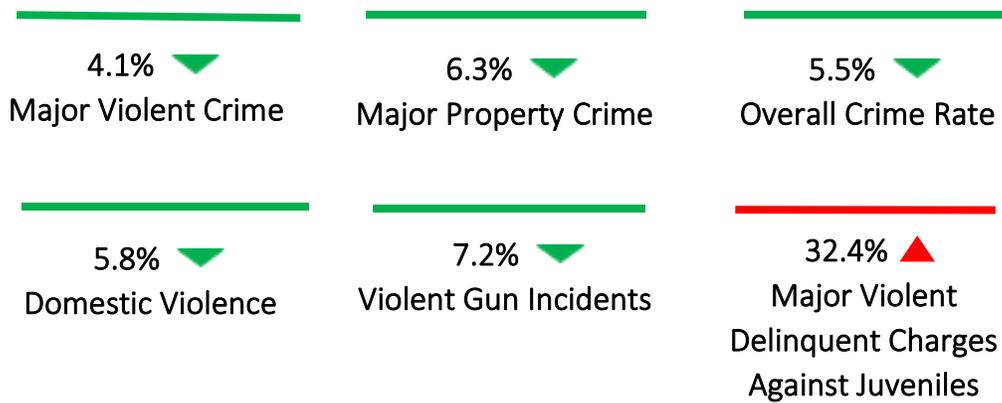
## Research Partnership With the University of Memphis

Monitoring progress and assessing the impact of the Safe Community Plan is aided by a partnership between the Crime Commission and the University of Memphis Public Safety Institute (PSI). The Institute is housed in the University's School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy and draws on researchers from multiple disciplines and departments across the University, including the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice. One of the hallmarks of this collaborative effort is to bring academic rigor to assessment of the crime reduction objectives of the current Safe Community Plan.

The PSI plays a key role in independently evaluating and assessing the success of Safe Community objectives as they are implemented. The lead PSI researcher, Dr. Angela Madden, has been indispensable in advising on important metrics needed for these Safe Community Plan objectives. The amount of work is vast and requires a team of researchers and research graduate assistants.

Another aspect of the joint venture is hosting forums related to crime reduction efforts tied to the OSC plan. In 2019, the PSI hosted a forum on employment opportunities for ex-offenders for the second year in a row, with the Tennessee Department of Correction and the Crime Commission serving as co-sponsors. Governor Bill Lee, Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland, and Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris were among the participants.

## 2019 Crime Trends Compared to 2018



For more detail on crime rates and figures with breakdowns for murders, robberies, aggravated assaults, gun crimes, juvenile delinquency cases, and more, go to the Crime Commission’s website at [www.memphiscrime.org](http://www.memphiscrime.org).

## Safe Community Plan Status Report

- Strengthen community engagement in crime prevention efforts.
  - Create a “Neighborhood Safety Initiative” to strengthen neighborhood watch and community partnerships with law enforcement and other public agencies. **Slightly Behind**
  - Assign prosecutors to targeted geographic areas to pursue local public safety priorities through a community prosecution model. **On Track**
  - Build trust through community policing and more interaction between law enforcement and the public. **Slightly Behind**
  - Expand the Safeways crime prevention program in apartment communities. **Slightly Behind**
- Strengthen law enforcement’s ability to reduce violent street crime.
  - Hire and retain more law enforcement personnel. **Slightly Behind**
  - Expand data-driven, proactive policing. **On Track**
  - Enhance law enforcement training. **Slightly Behind**
  - Enhance the Multi-Agency Gang Unit and information-gathering to reduce gang violence. **Slightly Behind**
  - Effectively initiate a violence intervention focused deterrence model to curb violent crime. **On Track**
  - Reduce gun crimes through tougher state penalties, vigorous federal and state prosecution, and communicating the consequences. **On Track**

- Strengthen intervention programs for ex-offenders.
    - Provide jobs, life skills and support programs for high risk ex-offenders. **Slightly Behind**
    - Implement swift, certain and fair administrative sanctions for violating certain conditions of probation and parole. **On Track**
  - Enhance domestic violence prevention and intervention efforts.
    - Evaluate and expand the Family Safety Center and support services to reduce the number of repeat offenders. **On Track**
    - Effectively initiate a domestic violence intervention model to deal with repeat offenders. **Slightly Behind**
  - Enhance interventions for juveniles committing delinquent acts.
    - Establish a youth assessment center for non-violent juvenile offenders. **Significantly Behind**
    - Create a system of Evening Reporting Centers to serve delinquent youth. **On Track**
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## Memphis Police Department Staffing: Where Do We Stand?

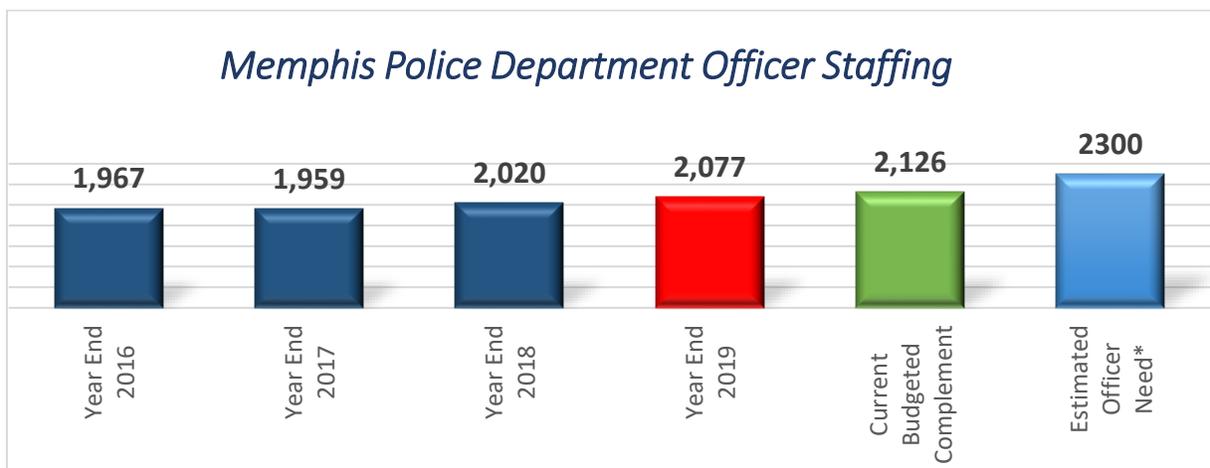
The Safe Community Plan calls for resolving shortages in law enforcement staffing (both in the Memphis Police Department [MPD] and Shelby County Sheriff's Office) and clarifying what the optimal staffing should be.

In 2011, the MPD had almost 2,500 commissioned officers. By the end of 2017, the MPD had suffered a net loss of approximately 20 percent of its commissioned officer force. (At the end of 2017, there were 1,959 officers.) Law enforcement officials and others feel there are a number of factors contributing to this net loss, including:

- A change in pension and health benefits, which resulted in morale issues among many officers and increased retirements and resignations;
- For fiscal reasons, the failure to have classes of new recruits for two fiscal years to make up for retirements and resignations; and
- The increased level of stress being placed on police officers, the result being more retirements and fewer qualified applicants.

The net loss of commissioned police officers has resulted in overuse of overtime pay, costing the City over \$25 million last fiscal year. This is not a sustainable model from a budgetary standpoint or from the standpoint of overworked officers often facing stressful situations.

Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland has made the addition of police officers a top priority. With the help of over \$6 million in private funds raised through the Crime Commission for MPD retention and recruitment bonuses, the City has been able to reduce the MPD turnover rate and achieve a net increase in police officers for the past two years.



\* The estimated need is subject to change based upon a planned zero-based staffing assessment.

While calling for an increase in the number of MPD officers to at least 2,300, the Safe Community Plan also calls for a true independent, zero-based staffing assessment to confirm the optimal staffing allocations and compliment size.

## **“ Nothing Works as Well to Reduce Urban Violence as Focused Deterrence”**

Memphis has a gun problem and a gang problem – too many guns in the wrong hands, including criminal gang members more than willing to engage in gun violence.

Curbing violent crime requires a concentrated effort, especially gun violence. It becomes even more of a challenge with juvenile offenders. The Safe Community Plan spearheaded by the Crime Commission calls for effective implementation of a Violence Intervention Focused Deterrence model in which multiple prosecution and law enforcement entities develop a partnership with community leaders and social service providers to deliver a “carrot and stick” approach to curbing gun violence.

When implemented properly, such an approach has consistently demonstrated that gun violence can be dramatically reduced. In his book *Bleeding Out*, Thomas Apt with the Harvard School of Government and a strong advocate for this approach, notes, “In the United States, nothing works as well to reduce urban violence as focused deterrence.” The effort focuses on a targeted group of individuals with a record of violence who (1) have sway over others as leaders and (2) are assessed as likely to continue down a path of violence absent some intervention. Through a “call-in,” the partnership communicates clearly to the targeted group a credible moral message against violence, clear notice about the consequences of further acts of violence, and a genuine offer of help for those who want it.

District Attorney Amy Weirich has taken the lead in launching Operation Comeback as a focused deterrence initiative in our community, with partners including the Multi-Agency Gang Unit, TN Department of Correction, MPD, Shelby County Sheriff’s Office, U.S. Attorney’s Office, FBI, various community leaders, and service providers. Results are promising. The challenge is to scale up the initiative and begin applying it to juveniles as well as adults.

## How Are Crime Rates Calculated?

We are asked from time to time how the crime rates released by the University of Memphis Public Safety Institute (PSI) and the Crime Commission are calculated and why they sometimes differ from figures released by individual local law enforcement agencies or the FBI.

The sources of the crime rates issued by the PSI and the Crime Commission are data submitted to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation's (TBI's) Tennessee Incident-Based Reporting System (TIBRS) by individual law enforcement agencies (such as the Memphis Police Department, Shelby County Sheriff's Office, Bartlett Police Department, and others).

Sometimes, a local law enforcement agency may release crime figures that differ slightly from those released by the PSI and the Crime Commission based on data submitted to the TBI. For their own internal purposes, some local law enforcement agencies track crime in a slightly different way. For example, the Memphis Police Department may release figures for "homicides" rather than "murders." Not every homicide is a murder. Also, for certain violent crimes such as aggravated assault, the Memphis Police Department tracks incidents while the TBI data is based on the number of victims. One incident can involve multiple victims.

The crime categories used by the TBI are designed generally to parallel the categories used by the FBI in its annual nationwide Uniform Crime Report (UCR) to the extent possible, given differences in definitions used by TIBRS and the UCR for certain offenses. It is important to understand that both UCR and TIBRS data only represent crimes reported to law enforcement. Crime rates are calculated based on the number of crimes per 100,000 population. U.S. Census Bureau 2019 population estimates were used to calculate the 2019 crime rates. Along with the rates per 100,000 population, the PSI and the Crime Commission also release the raw crime numbers for various categories based on TBI figures.

TIBRS and UCR definitions are similar for many of the offenses. However, the definitions are not always exactly the same. For example, the UCR definition for "rape" prior to 2013 was more limited than that used by TIBRS. Therefore, TIBRS rape figures will normally be greater than the UCR figures reported prior to 2013.

When the actual reported numbers in a crime category or offense category are small, percent change may be misleading. For example, if the total number is 100, then each instance is equal to one percentage point; if the total number is ten, then each instance is equal to 10 percentage points. We suggest that percentages be viewed with caution when the sample size is less than 30 instances.

*For more detailed information about crime statistics, the Safe Community Plan, contributors, partners, and more, visit [www.memphiscrime.org](http://www.memphiscrime.org)*