

Midwestern Region Case Study

Instructions: Carefully read the case study and answer the questions at the end of the document before the next convening on October 16, 2025.

1. Introduction: City Characteristics

The fictional city of Dudleytown has 350,000 inhabitants and is located in the southeastern region of the US. In terms of demographics, about 35% of the population identifies as Black, 17% as Latino, 45% as White and 3% as other races. The city's economic engine has been sustained for over 70 years by two industrial parks specializing in wood and chemical manufacturing. These facilities have provided stable employment for generations of workers, creating a foundation for the city's growth and economic development. Dudleytown has a thriving downtown district, filled with local shops and restaurants, along with a growing business sector. Here, a number of luxury housing developments rise against the skyline, attracting new professionals amid a growing tech industry. To the west, the suburbs house a percentage of its population, amid golf courses and other natural reserve areas.

In contrast, other areas of the city, such as the eastern region, have fallen into noticeable disrepair. People from surrounding rural areas and immigrant communities have relocated to Dudleytown, drawn by the jobs in the tech and industrial sector, along with the promises of urban life. Corresponding public investment has not matched this population growth in specific areas of the city. In areas like Dudleytown Heights, where 80% of residents are Black, Brown, and immigrant communities, the consequences of this neglect are evident. While affordable rents have attracted a great number of low-income residents, the neighborhood suffers from visible public disinvestment. Public spaces are not suitable for its residents as it often accumulates trash and lacks adequate lighting at night. Sewer and water services are deficient and the lack of city-managed affordable housing is noticeable.

Current Mayor, Xavier Thompson, campaigned on the promises of improving the quality of life in Dudleytown Heights, as previous mayors have focused on bringing private investment into the downtown district and the suburbs. Mayor Thompson has been in the role for the past 8 months and residents are demanding that his administration fulfill his promises of focusing on the most vulnerable communities of the city. However, the city's economic situation faces serious challenges, as a notorious deficit of its budget has been highlighted by the current administration. Over the past decade, the city prioritized the construction and renovation of roads and sidewalks, which mainly benefitted the industrial sector of the city.

Dudleytown's private sector is active and willing to support the local government in addressing the needs of the community. The Dudleytown Business Association has over 30 small, medium and large companies within its membership and has been in communication with Mayor Thompson to conduct a series of meetings to discuss their investment in the city and the community. However, the perception of residents of the business community is not entirely

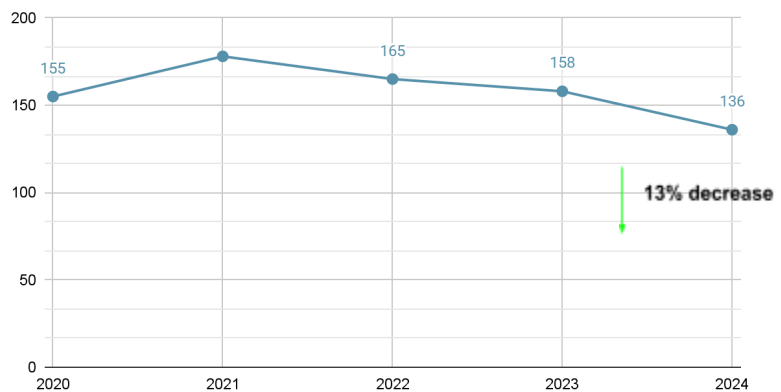
positive as efforts in the past have been conducted and ended up benefiting the affluent areas of Dudleytown.

2. Violence Dynamics

Dudleytown experienced a decline in homicides during 2024, continuing a downward trend after a significant spike in 2021. That increase coincided with national homicide trends during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that also saw a surge in gun ownership statewide—a level that has persisted since. Along with a high number of gun ownership, at the state level there is limited legislation and regulations on firearm ownership. This has a direct influence on the amount of guns on the streets of Dudleytown. When compared to other cities in the region, Dudleytown maintains a high

homicide rate compared to other cities (municipalities with rates exceeding 10 per 100,000 residents are typically classified as high-rate areas). The city recorded 158 homicides in 2023, which decreased to 136 in 2024—marking a **13% reduction**. This positive evolution, however, is a noticeable contrast to the **35% increase** of non-fatal shootings during the same period.

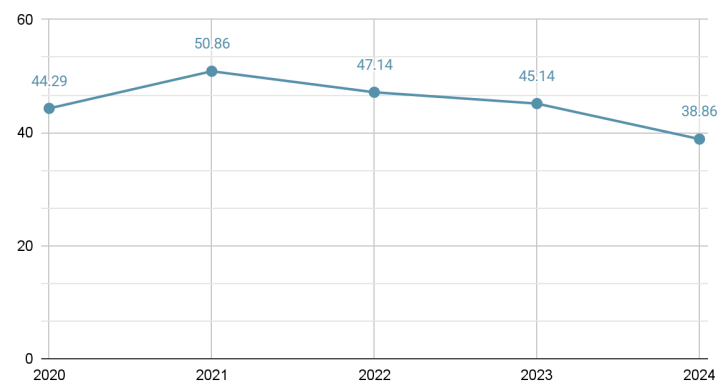
Total homicides (2020-2024)



The first quarter of 2025 suggests these patterns may be intensifying. Between January and March alone, law enforcement authorities documented 87 shootings across various neighborhoods, indicating that despite progress in reducing fatal incidents, gun violence remains a critical challenge that the community faces.

As gun violence incidents in the downtown area and the more affluent neighborhoods of the city don't seem to be frequent, a perception exists that these are more predominant in low income communities. Historically, Dudleytown Heights has seen higher homicide and injury rates when compared to the rest of the city. This has led to the criminalization of its residents by the media.

Homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants (2020-2024)



In addition, an uptick in drive-by shootings in public spaces in Dudleytown Heights have terrorized residents for the past year. These shootings concentrate in public spaces such as parks, squares, and local businesses, such as bars and restaurants. While most of the incidents haven't had fatal victims, residents are demanding the presence of law enforcement to secure these areas and, ultimately, find the responsible people.

While no one has conducted an in-depth problem analysis on the dynamics of violence, several key patterns have emerged from official information. Violence-related incidents, such as nonfatal shootings and homicides, primarily involve individuals aged 25-30. Though predominantly affecting males, authorities have identified females as both victims and perpetrators. Black and Latino populations appear disproportionately impacted by these incidents. The Dudleytown Police Department has identified the presence of groups or gangs concentrated in specific neighborhoods, though no evidence links them directly to any specific violent incidents. Some individuals identified as members of these groups are well known to the police as in the past they have been arrested after assault and property crime incidents.

Meanwhile, non-violent crimes, specifically auto theft and vandalism, have shown marked increases in the last year. Adding another layer to the demands of the population, since these incidents recently happened in broad daylight in all areas of the city. Police data

reveals that the majority of auto theft arrests involve youth between 11-16 years of age. The demographic contrast between violent incidents and property crimes suggests distinct intervention strategies may be required to effectively address each issue facing the community.

Recently, the Dudleytown Women's Alliance—a local nonprofit providing emergency shelter and support services to domestic violence survivors—has raised serious concerns about a noticeable number of homicides linked to intimate partner violence. The organization reports that over the past six months, at least five homicides appear to be connected to domestic violence. The five homicides share the following characteristics:

Excerpt from The Daily Dudley Newspaper:

January 10, 2025

DRIVE-BY SHOOTING LEAVES ONE DEAD, THREE INJURED

Last night at 10 PM, longtime Dudleytown Heights resident Maria Smith called 911 after hearing a series of loud noises outside her home.

"At first I hoped they were fireworks, but New Year's celebrations are mostly over by this time of month," Smith said. "Gunshots are becoming more and more frequent in our neighborhood."

Dudleytown Police arrived at 1222 Broadway Street, location of Scissors Bros Barber, where they discovered three injured individuals—two men and one woman—along with one fatality. Authorities have not yet released the victims' identities.

The barbershop, a well-known business in the community for over five years, has recently drawn attention from local residents. Neighbors have filed multiple noise complaints with authorities in recent months, alleging the establishment has been hosting late-night parties.

- All occurred within victims' households
- No connection exists between the individual cases
- Victims were women across a wide age spectrum (16 to 57 years old)
- Four of the five cases involved documented prior reports of assault or domestic violence reports

While Dudleytown Police Department has not released official statistics confirming this connection, local media coverage has documented several cases where investigations and subsequent court proceedings identified victims' intimate partners as the alleged perpetrators. This emerging pattern suggests domestic violence may be an increasingly significant factor in the city's homicide statistics, despite the overall downward trend in fatal incidents.

One recent case captured media attention and sparked community-wide concerns when one woman was sexually assaulted on the street after walking home from work. The incident occurred at approximately 12:15 AM when Stephanie Miller, a healthcare worker at Dudleytown Medical Center, was assaulted a few blocks away after leaving work. The attack took place in the Downtown District's nightlife area, a location populated with bars and music venues that typically experiences low crime rates. Following the assault, Ms. Miller ran into a restaurant where they assisted her in contacting emergency services. The Dudleytown Police Department apprehended the suspects shortly after the call as the suspects didn't leave the immediate area. Authorities identified three minors as the alleged perpetrators: M. James (age 15), J. Casas (age 19), and X. Lowell (age 16). Their young ages intensified the public's reaction to the crime, generating outrage and concern.

This incident has prompted residents to question broader issues regarding youth behavior and prevention systems. Over the last weeks, community forums in churches and schools, along with social media discussions, have centered around discussing the factors which are contributing to the youth's involvement in violent crime and if existing prevention programs are effectively addressing these issues. Currently, youth prevention programs exist within the school system and are supported by community-based organizations. The Downtown District case has become a catalyst for examining youth violence prevention strategies throughout Dudleytown, with particular focus on areas previously considered safe from such incidents.

3. Residents' Perspective and Media Response

Dudleytown authorities face a significant challenge while addressing violence: media coverage largely shapes public perception around public safety. Last year, The Daily Dudley Newspaper published an article linking recent increases in car thefts and drive-by shootings to gangs allegedly connected with Mexican and Guatemalan cartels. Following this story, local television outlets produced segments suggesting these cartels maintained ties to Dudleytown's growing immigrant communities. These reports are all based on off-the-record interviews with

government officials; police data does not support these claims as there isn't enough evidence linking the recent violence incidents to specific groups.

This media focus intensified after authorities arrested a 23-year-old Salvadoran man, in connection with a public park shooting that injured two people. Having arrived in the United States six months earlier seeking asylum, the suspect was later reported by State Police to have prior connections to Salvadoran gangs. This single case became the foundation for broader narratives about immigration and crime. In addition, stereotypes and prejudices around these immigrant communities, not just in Dudleytown but in the whole country, is another factor

which directly influences the perception of the residents and ultimately, the media.

Transcription for XBRG Channel 5 News:

July 14th, 2024

Public Spaces in Decline: Dudleytown Residents Avoid Parks Amid Safety Concerns

Dudleytown's central park stood empty last Sunday despite ideal weather conditions. The children's play areas and park benches—once bustling with activity—remained unused, in contrast to pre-pandemic times when the city's parks and green spaces were regularly filled with community members enjoying their weekends. The once-thriving farmers market, which previously attracted numerous local businesses, has similarly seen declining attendance in recent years as residents increasingly avoid these public spaces.

In an interview with XBRG News, local resident Irina Saldivar explained her decision to discontinue her daily walks in central park following last month's shooting incident that left two men injured. "Some of the neighbors feel the same way. We've stopped going outside; we're scared of getting caught in the crossfire," she stated.

When asked about potential drivers of violence, Saldivar referenced conversations with neighbors who believe recently arrived immigrants may be connected to drug trafficking organizations. "My parents originally came from Mexico. I came to this country when I was 10 years old—I'm an immigrant myself," Saldivar noted. "However, there are new people who have moved into the area who are stealing cars and selling drugs. I've heard that younger generations are now working for cartels."

Official crime statistics often contradict public perception by telling a more nuanced story. While residents increasingly claim immigration is the primary factor behind rising violence, police data indicates that the majority of violent crimes

involve long-term residents of the region. According to a press release by Dudleytown PD, over 78% of arrests for violent offenses in 2024 involved individuals born in the United States who had lived in the community for five or more years. This information was released in an effort to inform the public on the facts behind recent crime. However, this has not worked, as residents base their beliefs in claims from the media.

In addition, social media platforms have amplified misleading information about crime in Dudleytown. Local Facebook groups, resident app, and NextDoor app communities frequently circulate unverified reports of criminal activity, often with an emphasis on the perceived nationality or immigration status of alleged perpetrators. A recent study by the Dudleytown Research Institute, an independent group affiliated with the local university, found that

crime-related posts on these platforms received 6.5 times more engagement than posts about other community issues, incentivizing sensationalist content regardless of accuracy.

4. Government and Community Response

In response to the latest violence incidents, the mayor initially tasked the Dudleytown Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) with managing residents' perception around violence by presenting official data. The Dudleytown Coalition, composed of both long-time and immigrant residents, in collaboration with the OVP has organized monthly community forums in different neighborhoods where residents can directly engage with law enforcement officials and be presented with accurate crime data. These forums have shown that residents' fears often stem from highly publicized incidents rather than lived experience in their communities. These meetings also revealed that official data is not usually available or easily accessible for the general public.

In these meetings, the public's concern over the growing number of domestic and gender-based violence was also repeatedly mentioned around the city. Mayor Thompson announced last week that the OVP will be now tasked with addressing domestic and gender-based violence in addition to homicides and gun related assaults. While the OVP doesn't have experience in analyzing and addressing domestic and gender-based violence, it has announced a partnership with Dudleytown Women's Alliance to provide specialized training to the OVP.

Currently, the OVP collaborates with local and regional law enforcement agencies and community-based organizations. While the OVP does not provide direct services themselves, they act as a hub of coordination between governmental agencies and community-based organizations. The OVP has acted as an entity which supports the relationship between the community and law enforcement. Over the last decade, Dudleytown PD has had high-profile cases of police brutality and racial profiling which hindered their relationship with some areas of the city, including Dudleytown Heights. Over the past year, the new police commissioner has prioritized community-building efforts, but there is still a long way to go.

The community violence intervention (CVI) ecosystem in Dudleytown remains in a nascent stage, with public funding disproportionately allocated to law enforcement rather than comprehensive violence reduction and prevention strategies. Many community-based organizations providing direct services—including life coaching, street outreach, violence interruption, employment support, educational assistance, and trauma response—sustain their operations through a mix of local, state and federal grants, supplemented by donations from local businesses, and philanthropic organizations. This funding instability creates significant operational challenges, limiting these organizations' ability to develop sustainable programs and retain qualified staff.

Another barrier to the growth of the CVI ecosystem stems from persistent negative perceptions of intervention workers. Many frontline staff have personal experiences with the criminal justice system, including prior incarceration—experiences that provide unique experience and insight when working with high-risk individuals. However, these same backgrounds often subject them to stigmatization and professional marginalization. This stigma prevents many qualified individuals from building professional careers in violence reduction work, despite their specialized expertise and community connections.

Another significant challenge facing Dudleytown's CVI ecosystem is widespread confusion about the distinction between intervention and prevention activities. Many organizations claim to perform "intervention" work but actually focus on broader prevention strategies that, while valuable, don't directly engage the small percentage of individuals at highest risk of violence. Dudleytown's OVP could potentially provide crucial guidance and coordination to enhance CVI impact, but currently lacks the authority, resources, and specialized expertise necessary to fulfill this role effectively. While positioned to serve as a central coordinating body, Dudleytown's OVP remains understaffed and underresourced compared to law enforcement entities addressing violence. Without a properly empowered central coordinating agency, CVI efforts remain fragmented and inconsistently implemented across different areas of the city.

5. Challenges and Barriers

Intense media scrutiny has targeted Dudleytown's largest community-based organization (CBO), Dudleytown Strong, which serves high-risk individuals, following allegations of financial mismanagement. The organization, which has historically provided critical intervention services to those most vulnerable to involvement in violence, now faces a crisis of public trust after local media outlets published reports of potential misappropriation of funds.

"These allegations couldn't come at a worse time," notes Dr. Elena Klein, Director of Dudleytown's Office of Violence Prevention. "The services they provide—mentorship, job training, street outreach—are essential to our violence reduction ecosystem. In this line of work, when public trust erodes so does program effectiveness, creating an unfortunate situation for our work." The timing is particularly problematic as the organization was preparing to launch an expanded youth outreach initiative targeting the 15-19 age demographic identified in recent crime data as increasingly involved in car theft incidents.

Further complicating matters, Mayor Thompson has publicly credited law enforcement efforts for the recent 13% decline in homicides, despite the multiple factors that could have driven this decrease. During his recent State of the City address, Wilson emphasized the police department's role while making no mention of prevention and intervention programs, nor the work of the OVP. "The numbers speak for themselves," stated Mayor Thompson. "Our increased

police presence in high-risk neighborhoods and aggressive pursuit of gang activity has turned the tide. Dudleytown is becoming safer because our officers are doing exceptional work."

Dudleytown Strong's funding controversy and positioning from the Mayor have created a political opening for several city council members who have long advocated for increased police budgets at the expense of eliminating grants which support violence reduction work from local CBOs. City council members Bernard, Garcia, and Wells recently proposed a budget amendment that would redirect approximately \$2.3 million from violence prevention initiatives to the police department's gang task force.

"With these troubling allegations about financial mismanagement related to local organizations, we need to reassess where taxpayer dollars are going," City council member Wells stated during the recent budget hearing. "The decline in homicides proves that police work is effective. We should double down on what's working rather than continuing to fund organizations with questionable practices." An investigation by The Daily Dudley Newspaper showed that local grants funded the work of over 10 community-based organizations in the area. This proposed reallocation by lawmakers comes despite evidence from the Dudleytown Research Institute showing that comprehensive approaches including prevention, intervention, and community transformation yield more sustainable results than enforcement-only strategies. Their findings are based on the analysis of other metropolitan areas with similar homicide and nonfatal shooting trends while comparing their different approaches and decreases in violence.

As the trust in Dudleytown Strong diminishes, various community leaders have begun advocating for alternative organizations to take leading roles in violence prevention efforts. However, many of these newer organizations lack established relationships with high-risk populations and connections to local resources essential for effective intervention. "We're seeing organizations with minimal experience in violence intervention suddenly positioning themselves as alternatives," explains James Washington, a 25-year veteran of community outreach work. "While their intentions may be good, effective violence interruption requires trust that takes years to build. You can't just parachute in the community and expect immediate results, especially with the young men most at risk of involvement in violence." This fragmentation threatens to undermine the coordinated approach that violence prevention experts consider essential, potentially creating service gaps and reducing overall effectiveness.

6. Conclusion: The Future of Dudleytown

Dudleytown faces serious challenges in their efforts to ensure safety for all its residents. However, the community's involvement and the variety of stakeholders willing to support efforts to reduce violence is a solid ground for the OVP to coordinate efforts. The OVP must skillfully navigate the political landscape to develop and champion a strategic violence reduction plan with the overall goal of building a thriving future for the city where everyone feels safe.

While Dudleytown is fictional, its challenges mirror the reality many cities across America face daily. Gun violence doesn't exist as an isolated issue – it intertwines other important challenges such as equitable access to resources, housing, immigration, public space management, and governance, which require a comprehensive approach to address effectively. This case study invites you to see your own community reflected in Dudleytown, as a lens to examine similar challenges your city or region may currently or ultimately face. By recognizing these parallels, we can strengthen our learning community and collaboratively develop effective and sustainable solutions that address not just symptoms of violence but underlying causes.

7. Questions

Review and analyze this set of questions in preparation for the general discussion which will take place in the next convening.

1. What are the main themes and challenges around gun violence that need to be addressed?
2. What would you prioritize first and why?
3. What are the systemic problems intertwined with resident's perception around gun violence? How can the OVP collaborate with other governmental agencies to effectively address them?
4. What are the main steps towards building a strategic plan? Which stakeholders would need to be involved in the process?
5. How would you manage the contradicting perspectives between violence data and facts vs. resident perception?
6. What is the OVP's role amid the crisis other local CBOs will face after the Dudleytown Strong controversy on financial mismanagement? How can they support the existing CVI ecosystem?
7. How can the OVP build a sustainable approach that encompasses the main three areas of violence reduction work: prevention, intervention and community transformation?
8. What role can the business sector play and how can support current efforts?