Aurora City Council approves renewing ShotSpotter service for next three years

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On Tuesday, the Aurora City Council gave final approval for the city to renew its contract with ShotSpotter, a service that detects gunfire within a certain area, for three years.

The city has used the service by SoundThinking, Inc., since it was first approved by the City Council in 2022, according to past reporting.

Roughly two square miles of Aurora is covered by ShotSpotter, according to past reporting. The coverage areas include certain neighborhoods or other areas that historically have had more gunfire, while leaving out the areas that have not.

Around 40% of all confirmed shootings since 2022 have taken place in those two square miles, which make up just 4% of the city's total land, according to Aurora Deputy Police Chief Steve Stemmet.

ShotSpotter uses AI to detect gunfire and then triangulates its location using sensors throughout the area, Stemmet has previously said. The sound is sent to an incident review center, and, after being reviewed, the information is sent to dispatchers and to police officers' phones and squad car laptops.

Stemmet said the service allows officers to see how many shots were fired, a map of the shooting's location within an 82-foot radius and see multiple instances of gunfire on a map together — which can show officers if a shootout occurred or indicate the direction a shooter was traveling in, like in a drive-by

incident. They can also listen to the audio themselves to determine what type of gunfire occurred, officials said.

The Aurora Police Department has made 25 arrests, seized 22 firearms and recovered 749 shell casings from shootings using ShotSpotter, Stemmet previously told the Aurora City Council's Committee of the Whole.

ShotSpotter has been controversial in nearby communities, including Chicago, where it was discontinued last year by Mayor Brandon Johnson after a nearly year-long political fight over it, according to past reporting. The technology gained notoriety in 2021, according to past reporting, after an alert from a street in Little Village in Chicago sent police running after 13-year-old Adam Toledo, who was fatally shot by an officer during the chase.

As the issue played out in Chicago last year, Johnson argued that the service did not work well enough to justify the cost, according to past reporting, and ultimately vetoed its continuation after aldermen overwhelmingly voted in favor of keeping it.

SoundThinking is the only provider of ShotSpotter, so the item was not competitively bid, according to the resolution passed by the Aurora City Council.

The three-year contract will cost the city $140,000 each year, for a total cost of $420,000. It was approved unanimously by the council as part of the consent agenda at Tuesday's meeting.

In the future, the Aurora Police Department is considering expanding the service another square mile, according to past reporting, with research already done on the area it would cover.

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