

Madison Mayor Rhodes-Conway: On Chief Barnes' State of Public Safety Address

Posted on Friday, Feb 10, 2023

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I want to thank Chief Barnes for his work to make our community even safer than it already is. He and I both understand that seeing the effects of violence on our neighborhoods or in the news makes us feel unsafe. We know how important it is to both improve safety and to communicate transparently about it.

That's why MPD has invested real resources in a determined and strategic approach to reduce the gun violence that flared during the pandemic. One of the first things Chief Barnes did when he arrived in Madison two years ago was to ask all six MPD Captains to develop a written strategic plan for their district — informed by community input and with an eye towards preventing crime, not just responding to it. My office and the Common Council supported the Chief's approach with new resources and a new Director of Data Reform and Innovation.

We are seeing the results of this strategic planning and evidence-based approach to policing in the many impressive statistics in the Chief's report today. He reported a 40 percent drop in homicides, a 39 percent drop in overall shots fired calls, and a 33 percent drop in home and car break-ins. There is more to be done — no homicide or incident of gun violence is acceptable — but these numbers are very encouraging. We need to continue this concentrated and determined approach to public safety.

I will continue to work with Chief Barnes to reduce violence in our community. I want to thank him and all the people at MPD working every day to make Madison safer.