


# The Power of Place and Gun Violence

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# My elevator pitch ...



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## ... is to take the stairs



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## Which can also be fun



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<https://youtu.be/2iXh2n0aPw>

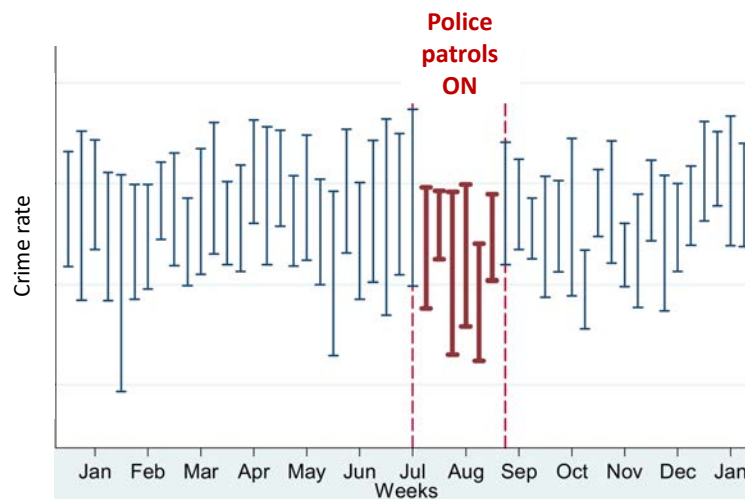
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## Place-based “nudges”

- Seemingly trivial place-based changes matter
- Changes in our environments retain choices but offer new or unseen benefits
- From passive (+20% usage of stair with signs) to active (+66% usage of new piano stairs) installations
- What about place-based changes to address gun violence?

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## Person-based interventions can be fleeting



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### Changing Places

*“Influences more people for longer periods of time”*





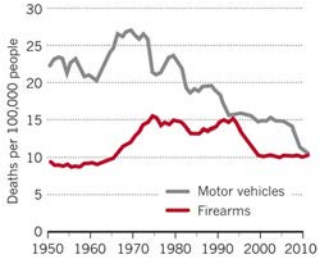

Syme 1999

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### Changing Places

*“Makes the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice”*

**Program success**




**PLACE-BASED**

Roadways,  
Airbags

**INDIVIDUAL**

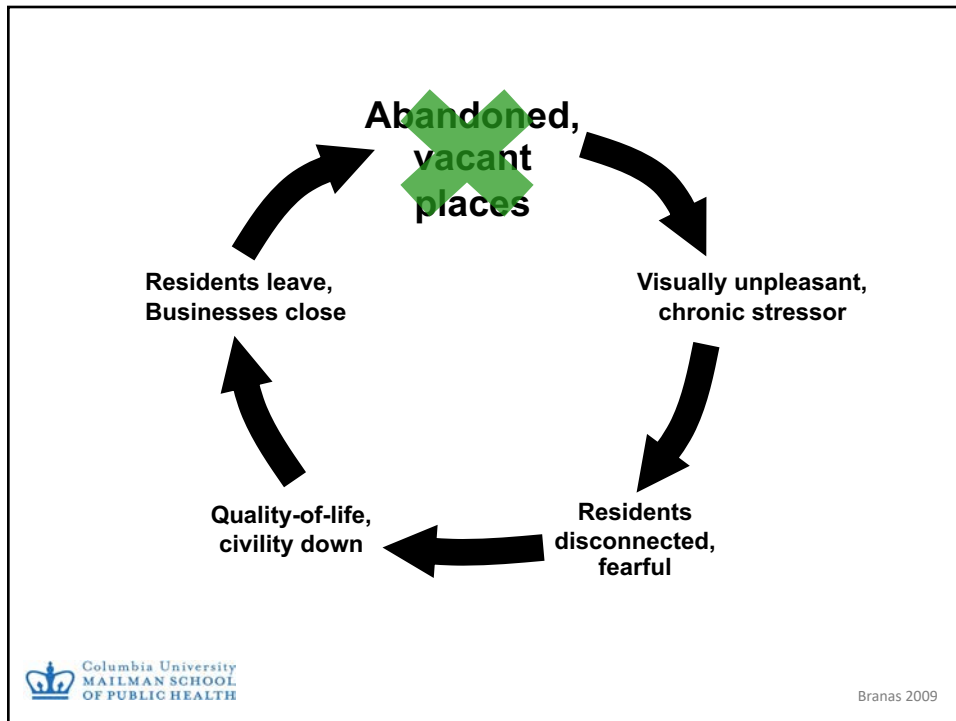
Driver education

**Effort required by beneficiaries**

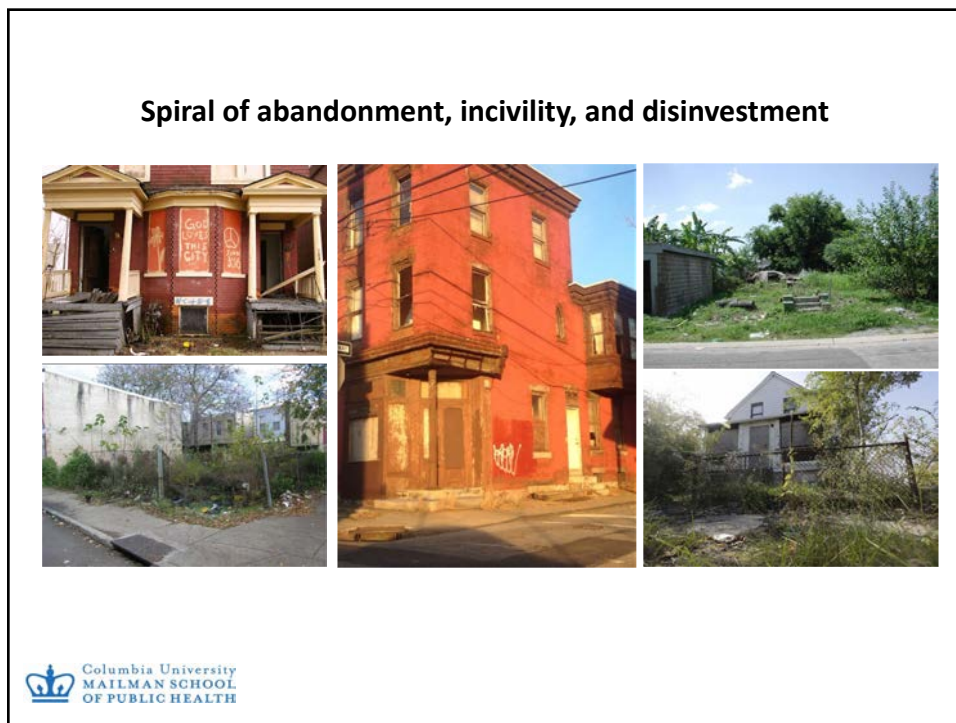


Baker, 1981

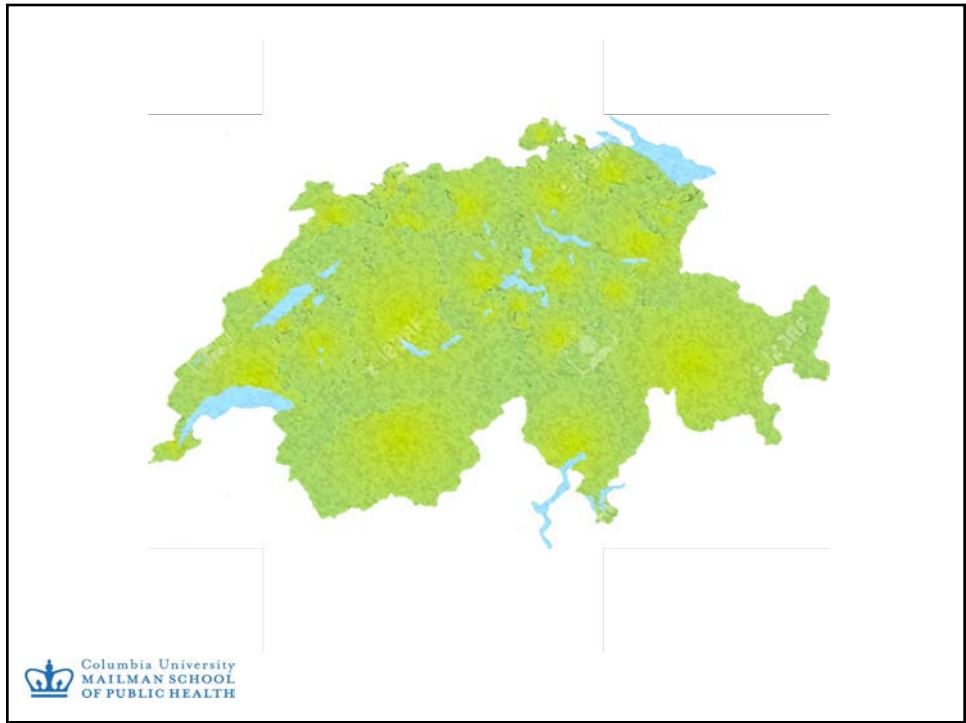
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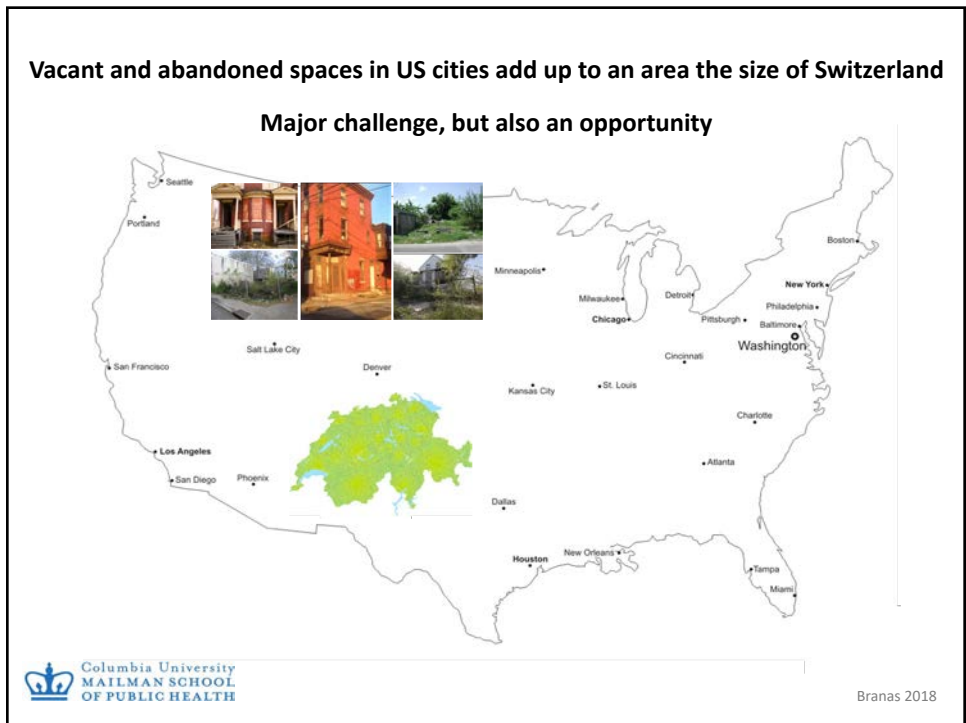
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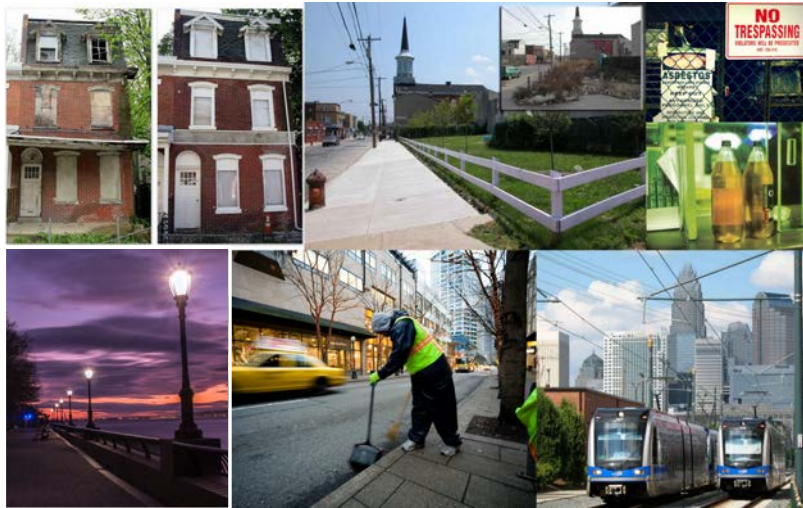


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## Place-based Changes Structural, Scalable, Sustainable



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Branas 2014

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## Community Initiation and Co-Design

“Biggest contributing factor is all the abandoned buildings, they’re like incubators ... where big piles of litter start.”

“People come here and they just dump trash on there, mattresses, sofas, any kind of junk they got.”

“You got to watch yourself walking past [vacant] lots because you don’t know who’s out there.”

“You don’t know somebody gonna come out the bushes or you’re going to get attacked, so I walk in the street.”

“It’s not safe walking past [abandoned homes] because the one across from me looks like it’s getting ready to cave in.”

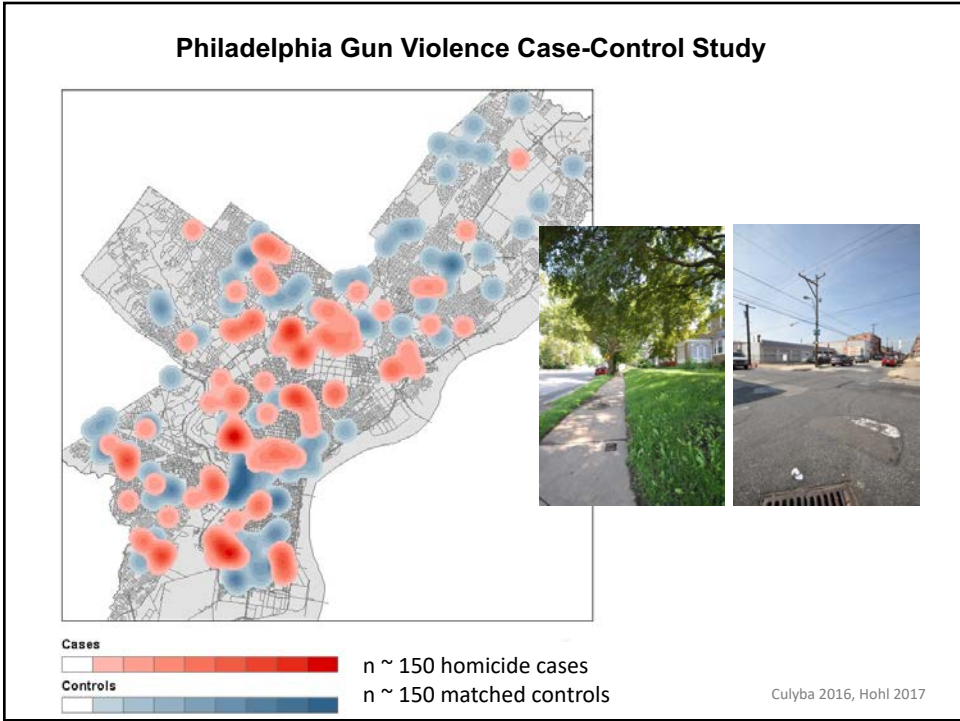
“If I could change things I would. There wouldn’t be so many vacant lots [and] abandoned houses.”



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Gallagher 2007, Birch 2008, Garvin 2012, South 2015, Kondo 2016, Roude 2023

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### Odds of gun homicide

	Excessive trash	+ 29%
	Poor building conditions	+ 74%
	Broken/boarded windows	+ 61%

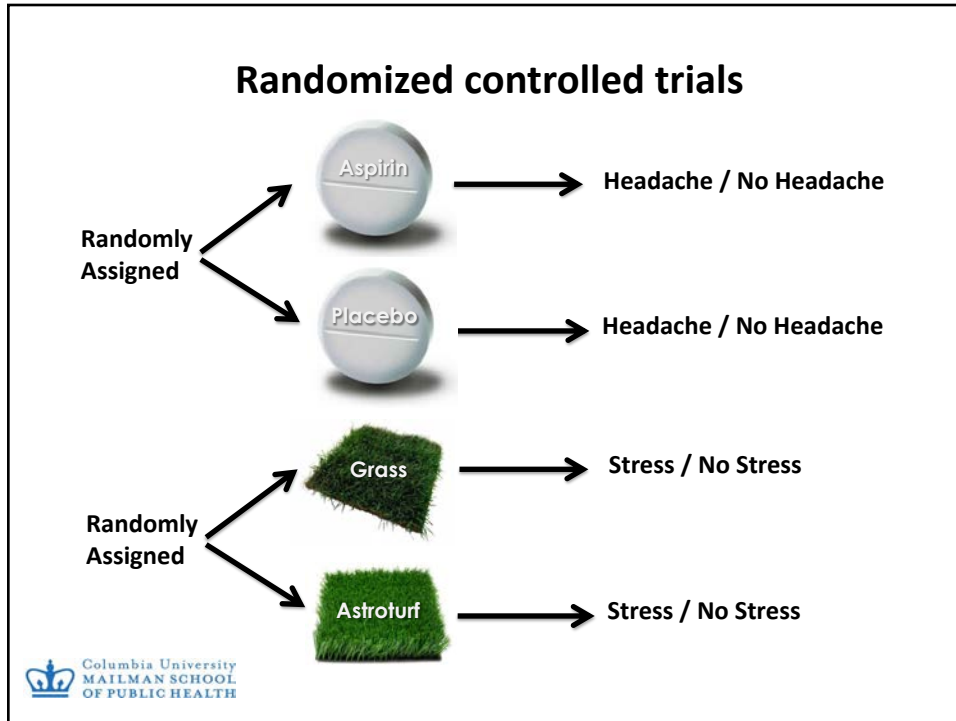
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	Working street lights	- 76%
	Parks	- 91%
	Maintained vacant lots	- 83%

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Culyba 2016, Hohl 2017

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### Dutch Place-based Field Experiments

- Purposely created disorder, graffiti
- Led to significantly more littering, graffiti, incivility



**A**



**33%**

**B**



**69%**

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Keizer, 2008

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### Impatient communities created new place-based interventions



→

These became  
standardized  
intervention  
protocols





→

With rapid,  
noticeable results



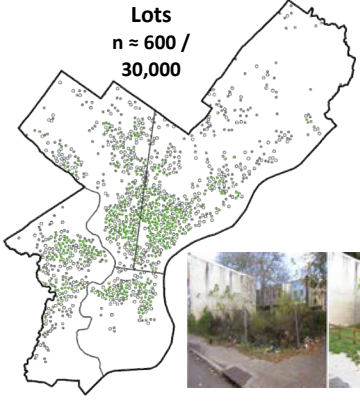



Branas 2016

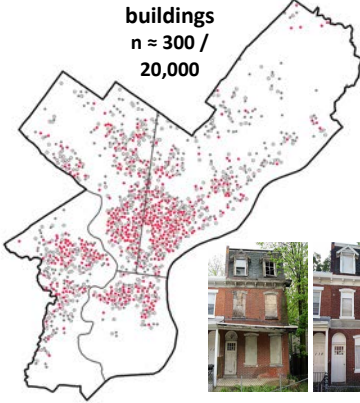

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### Randomized controlled trials


**Vacant Lots**  
n ≈ 600 /  
30,000

**Abandoned buildings**  
n ≈ 300 /  
20,000

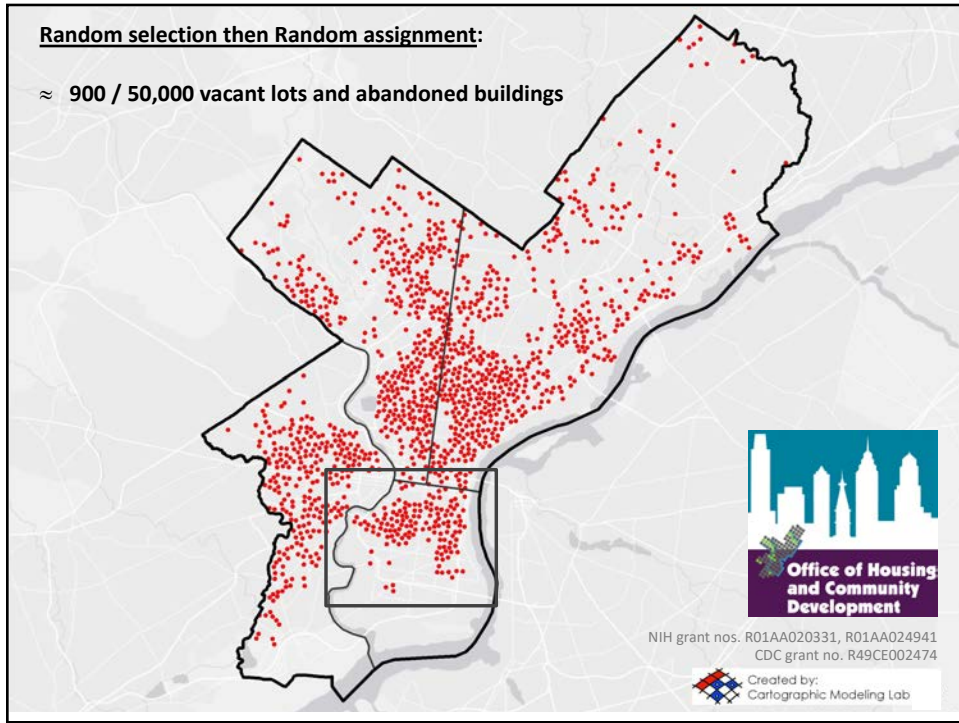



- Cleaning + Greening + Maintenance
  - Cleaning + Maintenance
  - Control Lots
- Cleaning + Building + Maintenance
  - Cleaning + Maintenance
  - Control Buildings

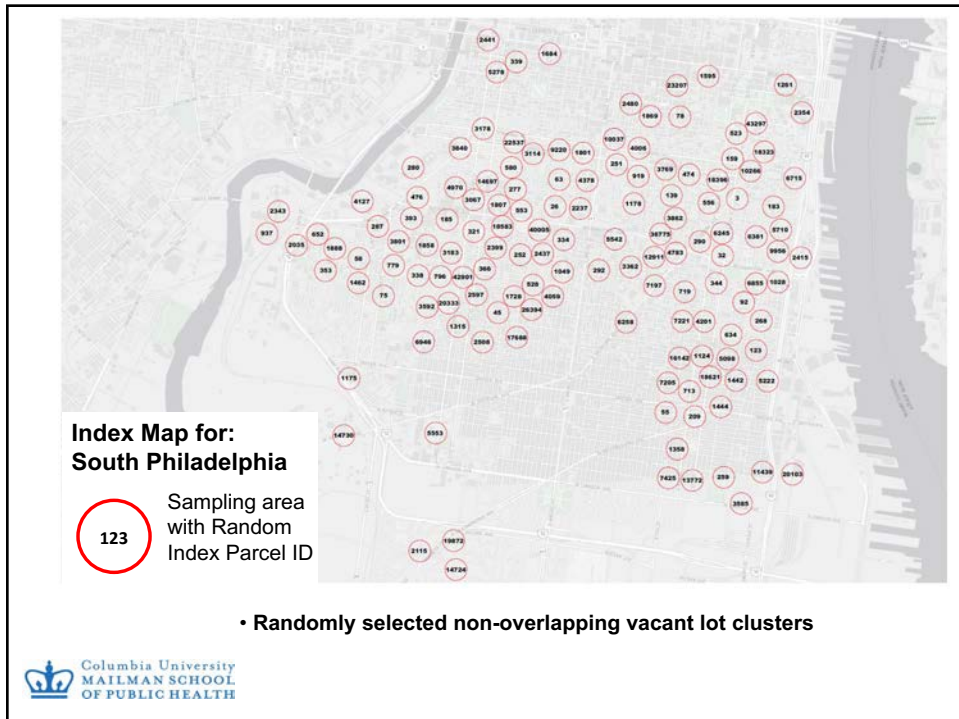


NIH grant nos. R01AA020331 and R01AA024941

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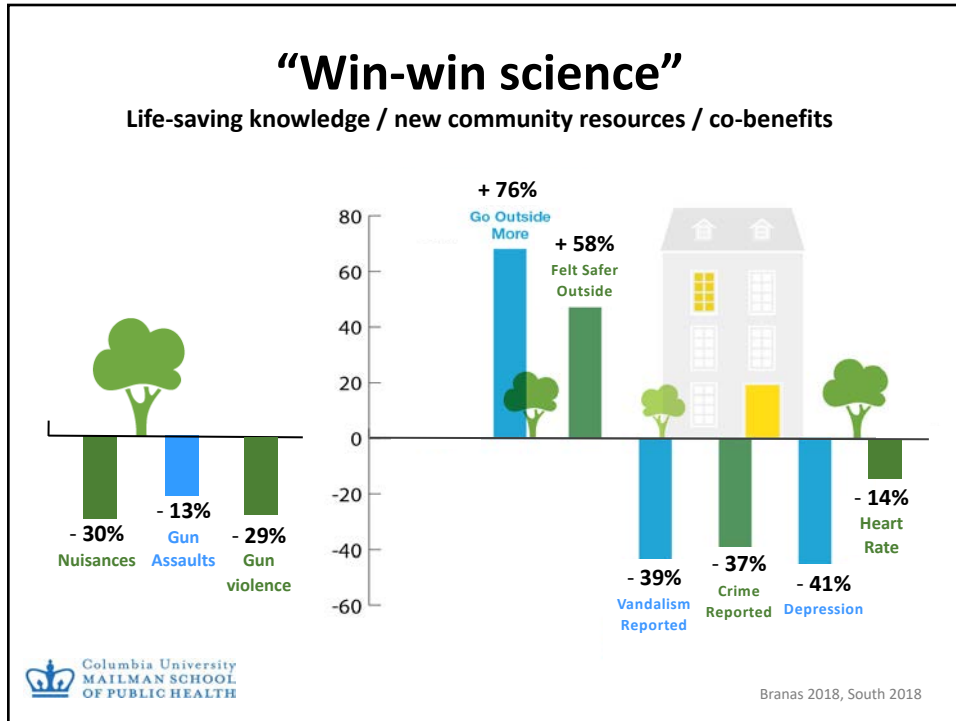
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**Street lighting installations  
in New York City**



**Trees and green canopy  
in Chicago**



**Significantly less  
violence (-36%)**




Kuo 2001, Chalfin 2019, Van Dam 2019

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## How does it work?

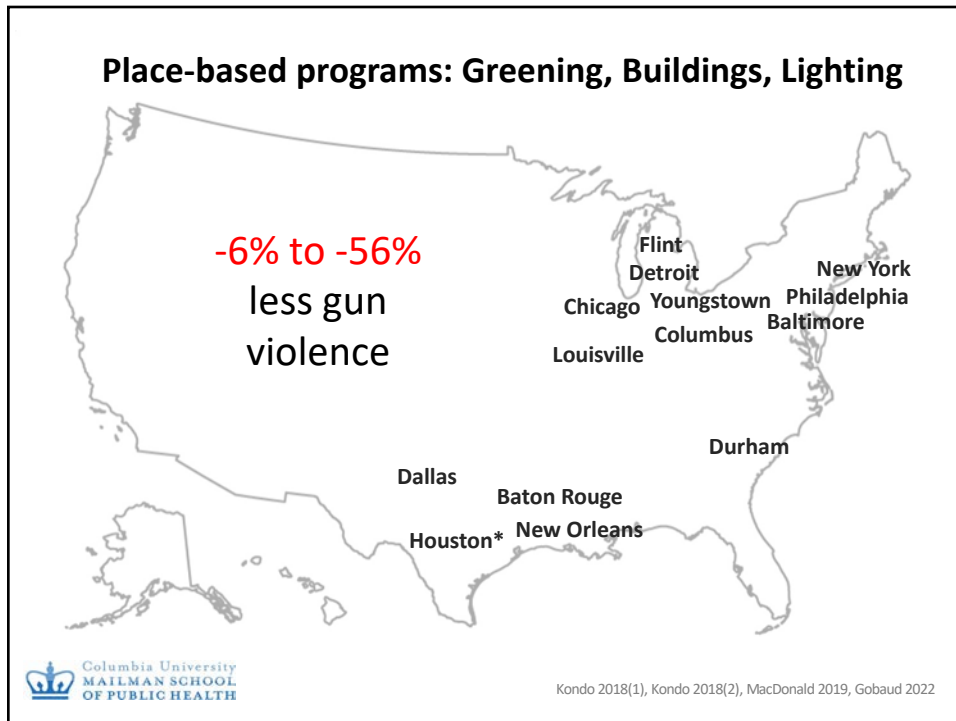
“Everyone feels much safer, much happier, than they had been.”  
“You can breathe a little easier, you know it feels much better, it feels good.”

1. Biologic response with less stress, fear, and aggression
2. Visual cues that someone cares, creating “busy streets”
3. Means reduction with fewer “storage lockers” for illegal guns

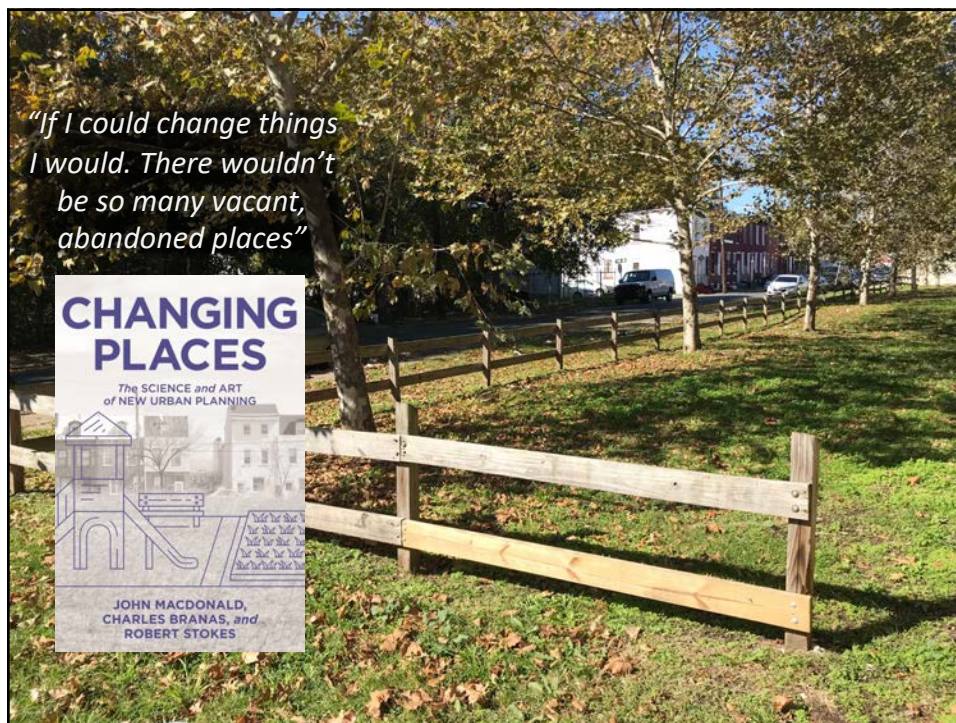


Wilson 1982, Taylor 1984, Kruk 2004, Aiyer 2015, Branas 2018, Friedman 2019

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