



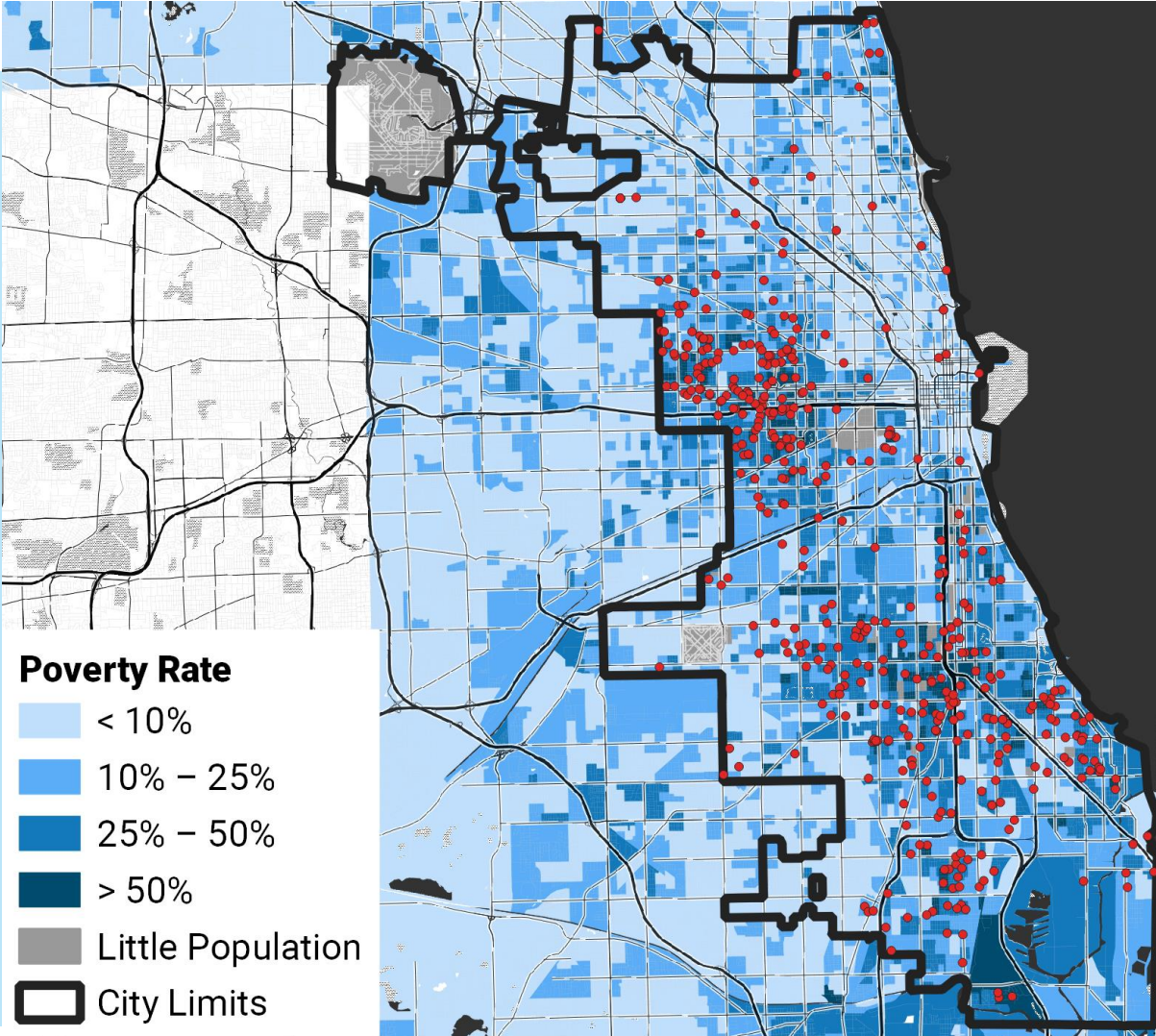
# Place-Based Solutions to Violence

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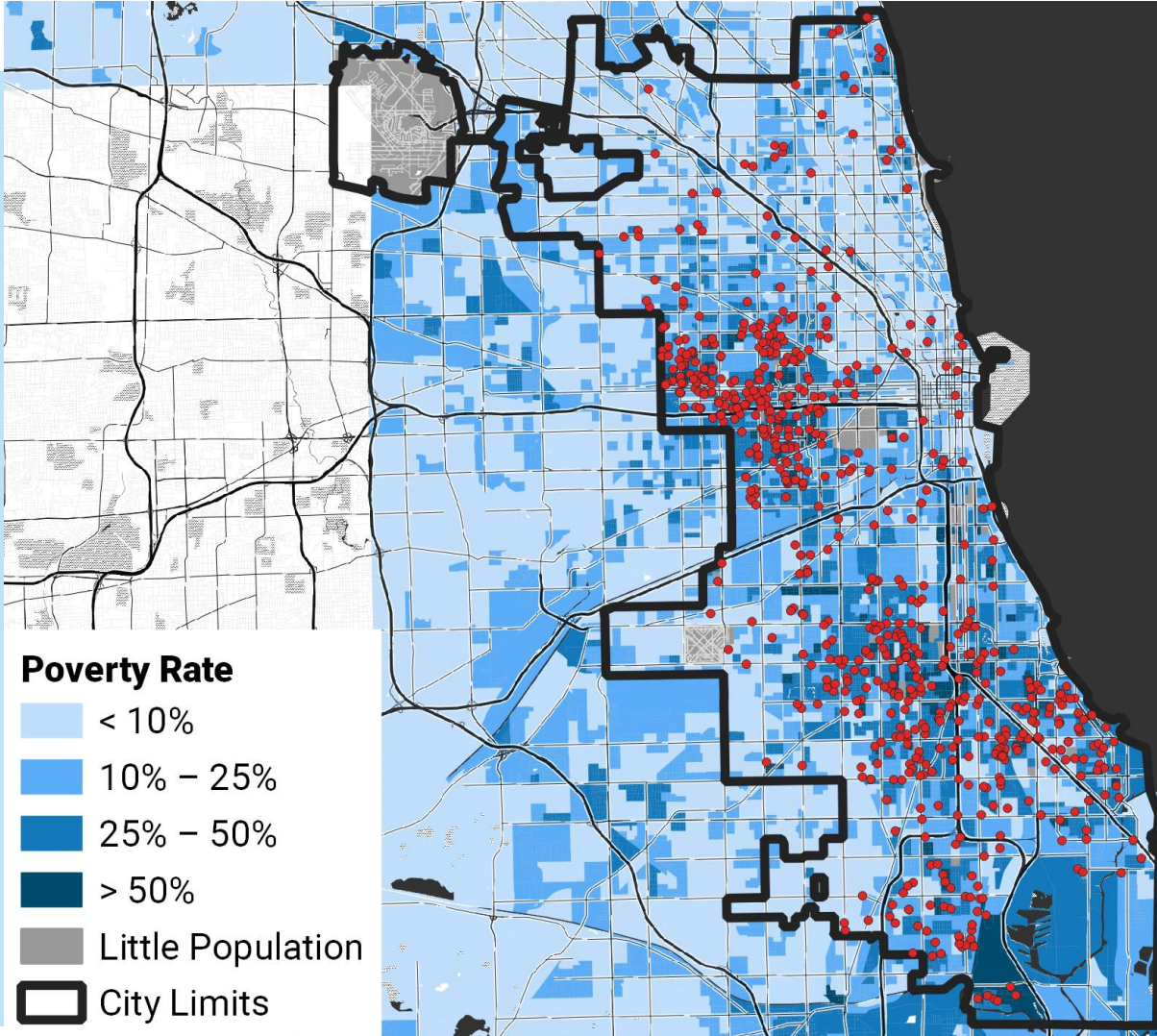
BROOKINGS



# The intersection between place and gun violence



2019 gun homicide locations from the Chicago Police Department. Poverty rate data at block group level from ACS 2019 5-year estimates. Background map by Stamen Design, under CC BY 3.0.

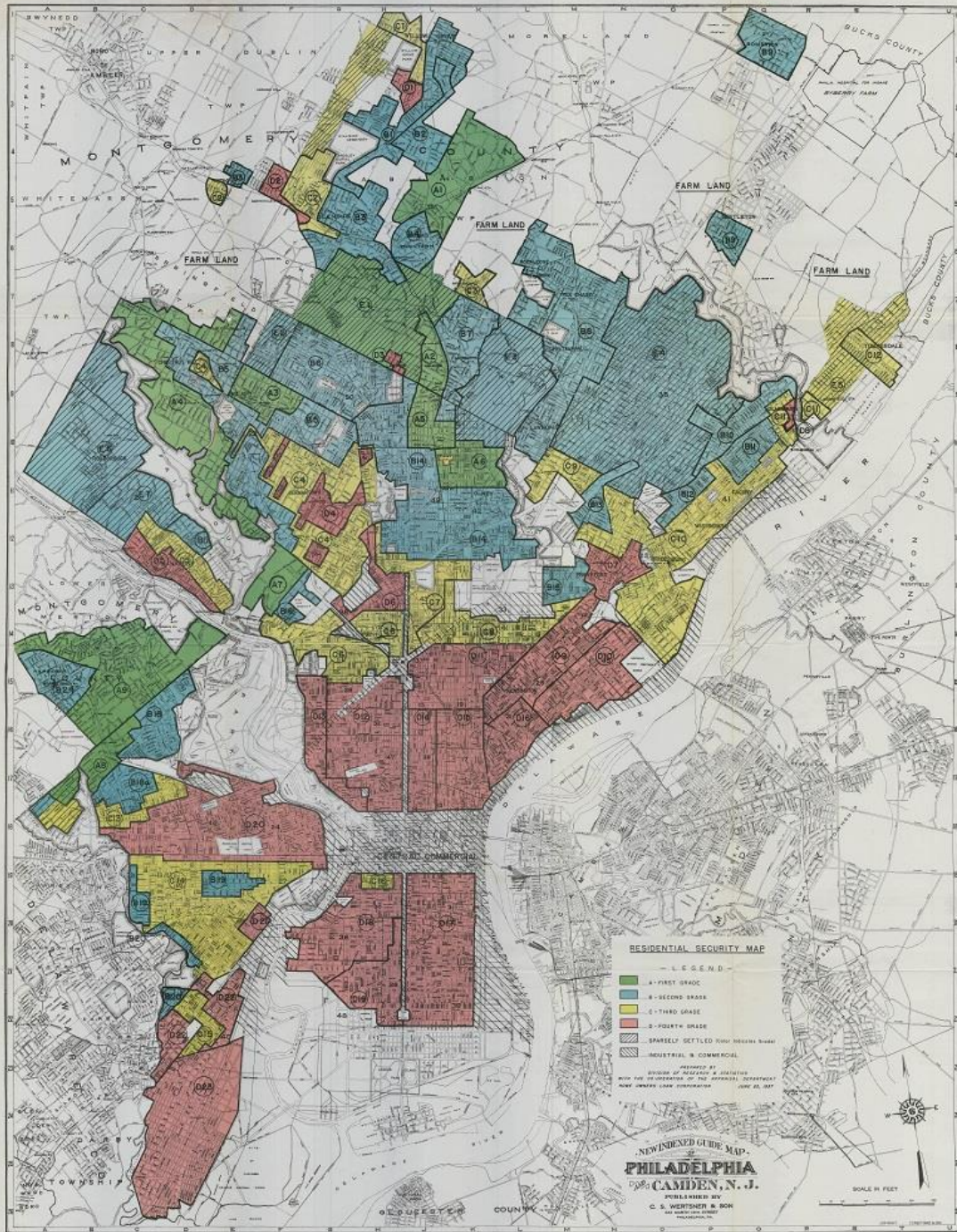


2020 gun homicide locations from the Chicago Police Department. Poverty rate data at block group level from ACS 2019 5-year estimates. Background map by Stamen Design, under CC BY 3.0.



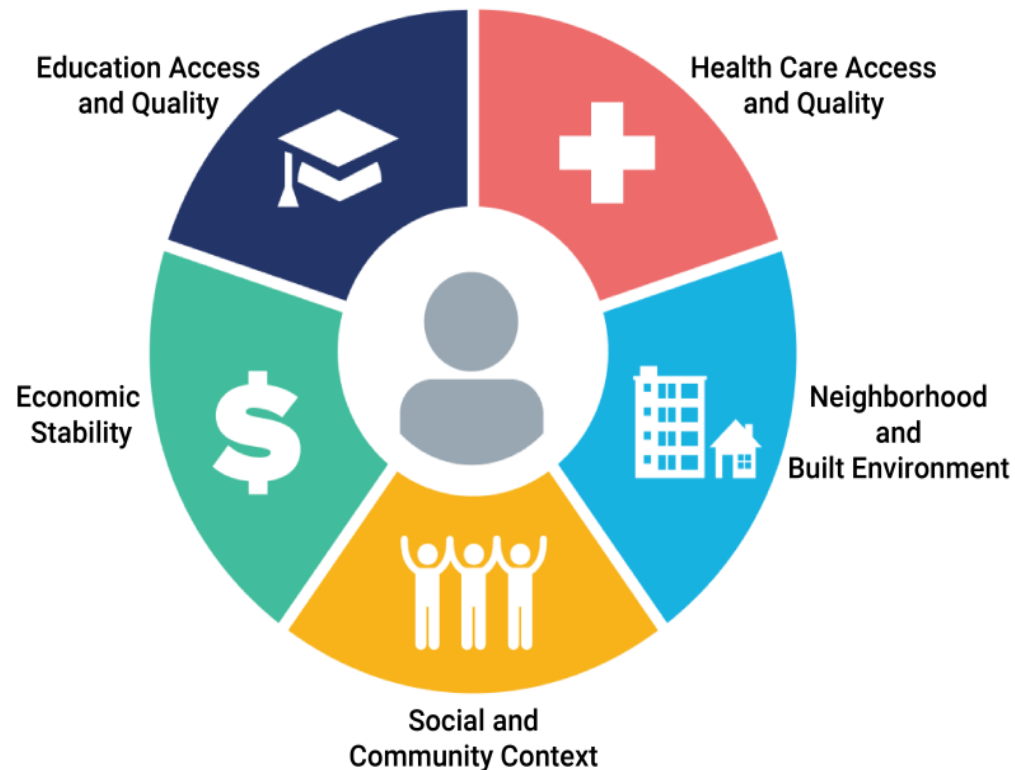
# Why does violence concentrate spatially?

- 📍 History of redlining (even when adjusting for current socio-demographic factors)
- 📍 Contemporary racial segregation
- 📍 Concentrated poverty
- 📍 Over-crowded housing
- 📍 High density of alcohol outlets
- 📍 High rates of mortgage foreclosures
- 📍 Vacancies



# The “social determinants of safety”

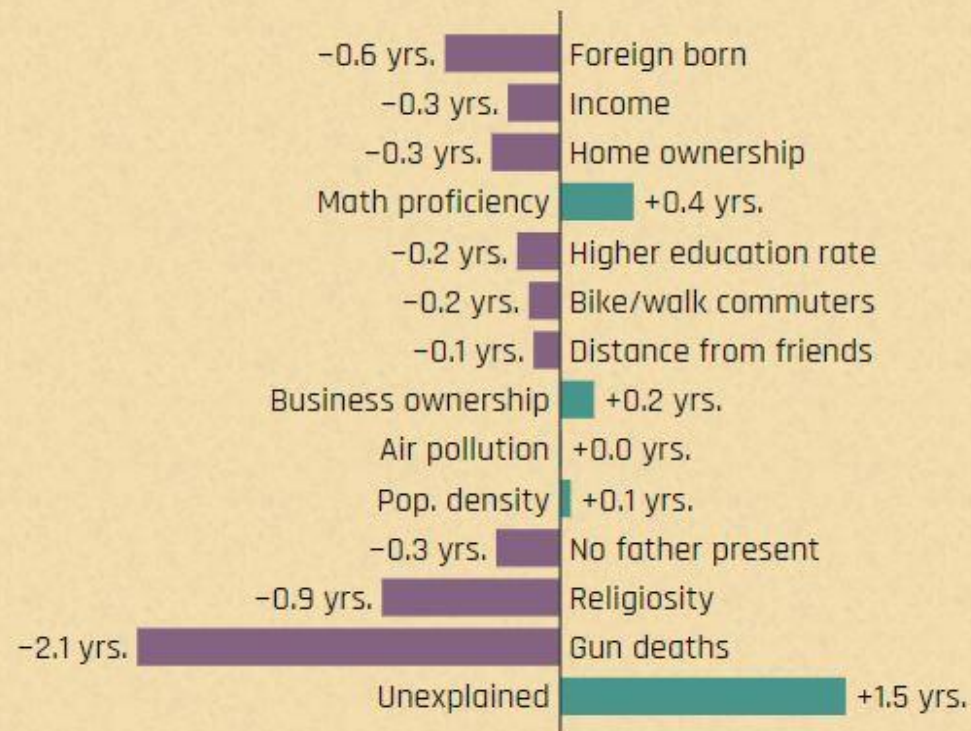
Figure 1. Social Determinants of Health



Source: Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved October 2021 from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

**B** Metropolitan Policy Program  
at BROOKINGS

IN DANVILLE CITY, VIRGINIA, WHAT FACTORS **ADD** OR **SUBTRACT** YEARS FROM PREDICTED BLACK LIFE EXPECTANCY?







"THE LAST STAND: UNITE"  
Artist: CARLA CARR  
Assistants: KIKEKAWA PALOMARES  
VENABLE  
Youth Assts: CLARENCE ROBERT  
TRAVIS DAVID YOHANNES KITARA KEARA  
Sponsored by the Social and Public Art  
Resource Center in conjunction with  
Leimert Park and made possible  
through a contract with the  
Cultural Affairs Department,  
City of Los Angeles.  
GREAT WALLS UNLIMITED:  
NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE, 2001

United We Stand

**What does the evidence tell us about how to address violence without inflicting harm?**



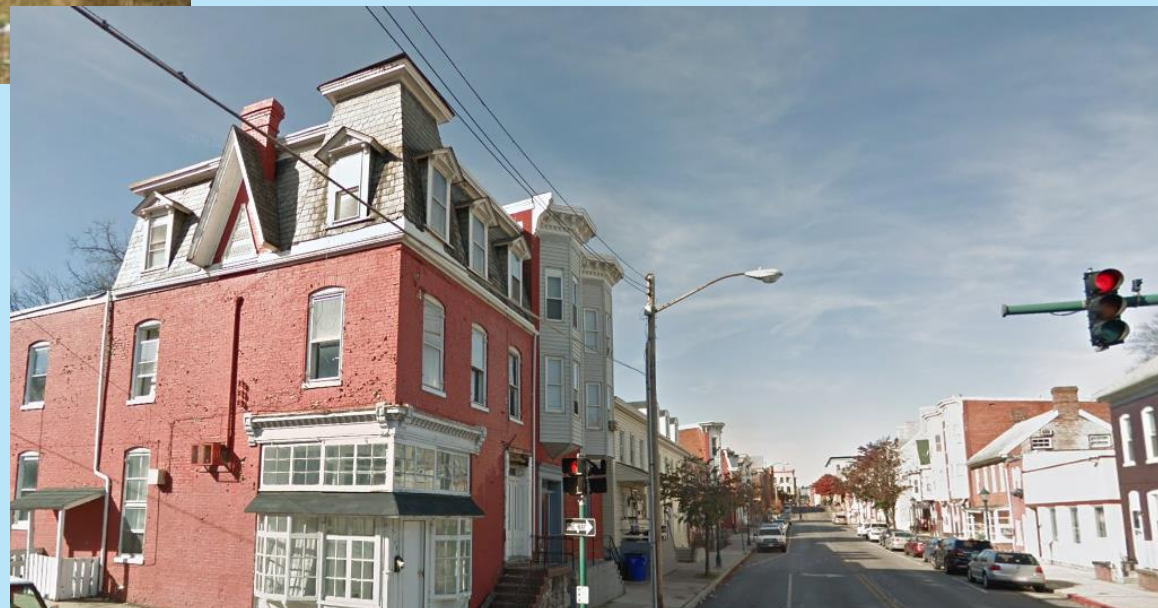
# Invest in the built environment



These strategies aim to **counter decades of public and private disinvestment** by revitalizing the physical environment and improving the health and safety of entire communities



- **Structural repairs to homes** in majority-Black Philadelphia neighborhoods led to a 21.9% reduction in violent crime
- **Cleaning and restoring vacant lots** led to a 29% reduction in violent crime in high-poverty Philadelphia neighborhoods.



Other improvements to the public realm—such as **urban greening and tree canopy programs**—reduce violent crime, particularly adolescent gun violence.



# Examples of short-term and long-term interventions

## Shorter-term

- Increased lighting in high-violence areas
- Vacant lot clean-ups
- Grants to homeowners
- Tactical urbanism/placemaking

## Longer-term

- Community-driven processes for neighborhood improvements
- Revise investment structures for development
- Replace lead pipes
- Redevelop local parks





# Case Study: Chicago's Place-Based Violence Prevention Initiatives

Chicago prioritized 15 neighborhoods in the South and West sides with highest rates of violence and victimization to implement place-based safety efforts, including \$10 million to coordinate consistent **cleaning of vacant lots, fund public realm improvements, building restorations, the preservation of safe and affordable housing, and the reactivation of city-owned land**





# Economic opportunity



**Youth workforce development and employment programs**, including summer jobs programs, can reduce youth involvement in violence by as much as 35% or 45%

**Universal basic income and cash relief pilots** have also been found to reduce neighborhood violence, among numerous other community benefits

**Everywhere basic income has been tried**





# Examples of short-term and long-term interventions

## Shorter-term

- Youth summer job programs
- Mentorship and entrepreneurship
- Economic support for formerly incarcerated people
- Temporary cash relief pilots

## Longer-term

- Place-based approaches to increase educational opportunity
- Targeted workforce development
- Job quality
- Universal basic income





# ARPA investments in economic opportunity: Danville, Virginia

Over four years, Project Imagine turned everyday community spaces into workforce development hubs. **“We made the barbershop a haven,”** he said, noting when one of his outreach workers isn’t there, people will ask the barber, **“Where’s my man with the jobs?”**



- Danville funds to **both “direct” violence prevention** on community violence initiatives as well as **“indirect” violence prevention**, such as \$1 million to address blight and additional grants to help residents of disinvested neighborhoods start businesses.
- Project Imagine is a key example. It provides at-risk youth with **mentorship, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities**, and enables former participants to become “ambassadors” who represent their neighborhoods in city meetings and **provide input on the city’s strategic plan.**



# Social cohesion and conflict mediation



Source: *Washington Post*, The Rev. Brian Herron, left, and Shariff Willis, on duty as volunteer "violence interrupters" for 21 Days of Peace in Minneapolis



Source: *The Trace*, The Pennsylvania Avenue branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library. Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore

# Examples of short-term and long-term interventions

## Shorter-term

- Expand and strengthen CVI programs
- Summer events series for youth
- Pop-up spaces

## Longer-term

- Strengthen non-carceral crisis response systems
- Invest in new community institutions
- Increase access to third spaces



# Case Study: St. Louis, Missouri's investments in youth programming

**“We heard from the youth that they feel like they do not have access to their whole neighborhood.** They do not have access to safe spaces in their neighborhood. The spaces that should be safe, like parks, aren't safe because of gun violence or drug dealing or gang activity. Or the spaces that are safe—like a recreation center or a YMCA or a business—they don't feel welcome in them, or they feel there are barriers, whether that's a fee or transportation.” - Jessica Meyers, Director, St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission



As part of its ARP allocation, St. Louis devoted \$5.5 million to violence interruption initiatives. One is Safer Summer St. Louis, which funds youth- and grassroots-led organizations to plan pop-up events aimed at providing safe, community-building spaces.





**Civic  
structures  
and local  
institutions**



# Examples of short-term and long-term interventions

## Shorter-term

- Provide TA for grassroots organizations to access grant funding
- Embed equity requirements in grantmaking
- Reduce reporting barriers

## Longer-term

- Community-led participatory decisionmaking
- Create a non-carceral agency to coordinate community safety investments



# Case Study: Minnesota's investments in grassroots organizations

- The state decided it needed to **meet constituents' demands** by making bold ARPA investments in toward non-carceral public safety approaches.
- It obligated **\$16.8 million for violence prevention and intervention activities** and made another \$2.5 million available through Violence Intervention Grants, designed to **reach an equitable distribution** by providing direct supports for grassroots organizations.



The grant program was designed to provide “a new way for Minnesota to push out money that was community-focused,” where “decisions about where funds would go come directly from the community.” - Kate Weeks, Minnesota Department of Public Safety





# Conclusion

**If the causes of violence exist outside of the criminal legal system itself—rooted in inequities such as poverty, unemployment, segregation, and poorly maintained infrastructure—then we must all look outside of the criminal legal system for solutions to address it.**



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TRANSFORMATIVE PLACEMAKING







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