



## Concept Intro: Revitalization

### Did you know that cleaning up a vacant lot, or renovating a home, can make a neighborhood safer?

Research demonstrates that physically altering public and private spaces can have positive impacts on a community. Neighborhoods with high levels of physical disorder (e.g. graffiti, litter, abandoned properties) are often perceived as unsafe and do, in fact, attract a variety of criminal activity. However, environmental transformations, such as increasing street lighting on dark alleyways, posting signs to prohibit trespassing, replacing graffiti with murals, replacing blighted properties with new community assets all project a positive image that can encourage legitimate use of spaces and discourage potential offenders and crime.

Recently, transformative efforts aided by partnerships between community organizations, local businesses, police, and residents have been found to reduce crime. By pooling a wealth of resources, these partnerships change the way places function. Vacant properties that were havens for prostitution are being turned into affordable housing. Parks where drugs were sold are being cleaned up and renovated to include new walking and biking trails. These revitalization measures can also help tighten community bonds: Residents begin to regain a sense of ownership over their neighborhood and the “no one cares” mentality starts to diminish. A virtuous circle can be started, where safety improvements draw in business owners, and then the flourishing economic activity brings in more pedestrian traffic—which in turn discourages crime.

### Key Terms

**Community Development**—the process of community members teaming up to identify local needs, devise appropriate strategies, and allocate resources for improvements, typically through the activities of a local non-profit organization. A community development corporation is a certain type of neighborhood improvement organization that are commonly organizations that pursue a mission of area improvement through real estate development.

**Crime Prevention through Environmental Crime (CPTED)**—a crime prevention strategy that emphasizes the tactical use of the physical environment to deter criminal activity. Basic CPTED relies on four principles: 1) natural surveillance, 2) natural access control, 3) territorial reinforcement, and 4) maintenance and management.

**Physical Revitalization**—improving a space to regain its original purpose or to create a positive new use, often with some form of economic or social benefit.

## The BCJI Approach

These powerful themes run through all BCJI projects.

### DATA-DRIVEN

BCJI targets crime hot spots – often streets, properties or public spaces in communities that have struggled with crime for years. Researchers are engaged in the day-to-day work, helping partners examine problems, assess evidence-based solutions, and monitor progress.



### COMMUNITY-ORIENTED:

BCJI champions active roles for residents in identifying problems, selecting strategies and creating safe and healthy environments.



### SPURS REVITALIZATION:

BCJI tackles problem properties, unsafe streets and parks, unemployment, transit barriers and service gaps related to crime.



### BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS:

BCJI taps the resources of public, nonprofit and community leaders to bring more resources and different approaches to bear on longstanding crime challenges for lasting change.



## Concept Intro: Revitalization, *continued*

Examples include planting a garden in an abandoned lot or replacing blighted structures with quality rehabilitated homes.

**Problem Properties**—any property that is associated with high levels of criminal activity. These properties are usually poorly maintained and suffer from declining physical conditions, such as dilapidated structures, overgrown vegetation, and litter.

### Where Revitalization Efforts Have Worked to Address Crime

#### Charleston, WV

Community partners in the West Side District shut down a bar that was previously a site that caused enough trouble to require repeat calls to the police. The property is now an eatery that's popular among residents of a nearby senior housing complex.

#### Evansville, IN

On vacant lots in the Jacobsville neighborhood, Habitat for Humanity rallied community volunteers to help **build six new homes** to reduce neighborhood crime hot spots.

#### Providence, RI

**Part II crime decreased by 41 percent** in the Olneyville community after police and community developers came together around a plan to capitalize on the natural advantages of property near the Woonasquatucket River, developing a new riverside park, constructing affordable housing, renovating blighted structures, and implementing active policing practices.

#### Los Angeles, CA

Community partners in the Hollywood and Pacoima neighborhoods are addressing blight and increasing safety by improving walkways and parks, including **opening a “people street”** in 2016 in Pacoima that is both pedestrian friendly and car free.

### Resources

For more information on community development, visit the Institute for Comprehensive Community Development website: <http://www.instituteccd.org/>

For more information on revitalization strategies, visit the LISC website: <http://bit.ly/2myAa94>.

For more information on place-centric crime reduction efforts, refer to a LISC paper titled Place, People, Police: <http://www.lisc.org/our-resources/resource/place-people-police>

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