

# The Mayor's Task Force on Safe Communities

A photograph of Mayor Eric Johnson speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, a striped tie, and glasses. He is holding a microphone. In the background, several other people are seated, some in white shirts and some in suits. The setting appears to be a formal meeting or press conference.

“We can’t ask or expect law enforcement to do it all. When we’re faced with a problem, we come together as a city and we solve it.”

**Mayor Eric Johnson**

August 19, 2019



# Contents

Background | 2

Mission & Process | 3

Executive Summary | 4–5

Recommendations | 6–36

Additional Opportunities | 37–38

Conclusion | 39

# Background

During the Summer of 2019, increased gun violence and tragedies that took the lives of children led to outcry among community leaders, city officials, and residents for new action. On August 19th, days after speaking at the funeral for a 9-year-old victim of a deadly shooting, newly elected Mayor Eric Johnson took action by announcing the creation of the Mayor's Task Force on Safe Communities, which was tasked with providing recommendations to the Mayor on non-law enforcement solutions to crime and violence in Dallas. Within a matter of days, a unique collection of sixteen individuals with diverse professional experience, neighborhood-level insights, community relationships, and subject-matter expertise were selected to serve as Task Force participants.

“We need serious solutions. I just spoke at the services of yet another student. I can't begin to express to this group how sick and tired I am of getting those types of phone calls from mothers, fathers, and siblings emotionally traumatized as a result of these senseless murders. This cannot be a 'dog-and-pony' task force. We must return with a cure for this sickness.”

—**Derrick Battie**, Task Force Member

## Task Force Members

### **Marc Andres**

Real estate developer in the Lower Greenville, Henderson Avenue, and Bishop Arts neighborhoods

### **Derrick Battie**

Community liaison at South Oak Cliff High School

### **Rev. Michael Bowie, Co-Chair**

Senior Pastor at St. Luke's Community United Methodist Church

### **Alan Cohen, Co-Chair**

CEO of the Child Poverty Action Lab

### **Stephanie Elizalde**

Chief of School Leadership at Dallas ISD

### **Gary Griffith**

Chairman of Safer Dallas

### **Mita Havlick**

Executive Director at the Dallas Education Foundation

### **Changa Higgins**

Community activist and Leader of the Community Police Oversight Coalition

### **Chad Houser**

Chef and Executive Director of Café Momentum

### **Amanda Johnson**

Gun sense advocate with Moms Demand Action

### **René Martinez, Co-Chair**

Educator and community activist

### **Edna Pemberton**

Long-time advocate for Oak Cliff

### **Alex Piquero**

Professor of Criminology at the University of Texas at Dallas and Monash University in Australia

### **Debbie Solis**

Director of Family and Community Services at Voice of Hope Ministries

### **Maria Valenzuela**

Office manager at the Ferguson Road Initiative and long-time Far East Dallas resident

### **Marian Williams**

Chairwoman at Southfair Community Development Corp.

# Mission

Mayor Johnson provided the Task Force’s three co-chairs with a clear set of expectations to keep the work focused and results-oriented. The mission of the Mayor’s Task Force on Safe Communities over the past several months has been to identify tangible and evidence-based solutions for reducing urban gun violence in Dallas that are actionable and meet the criteria listed below.

## Recommendations should be:

- **Informed by the lived experience of the community**
- **Evidence-based, research-backed, and data-driven**
- **Outside the realm of traditional law enforcement and policing**

“Some programs sound good or feel good but do not have the evidence to back them up as effective crime deterrents. We can’t be distracted by such programs if we want to follow science, employ data-driven tools, and implement ongoing evaluation.”

—**Alex Piquero**, Task Force Member and UTD Professor of Criminology

# Process

Task Force split into two committees to maximize limited time.

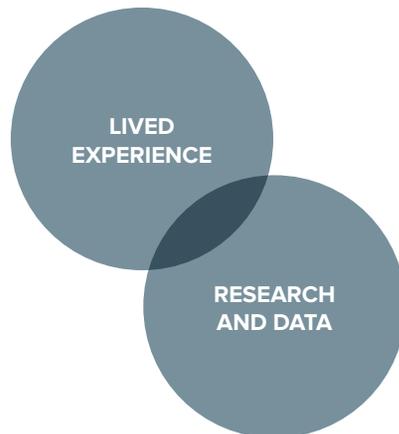
## COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Led by René Martínez & Rev. Michael Bowie

## RESEARCH & DATA ANALYSIS COMMITTEE

Led by Alan Cohen

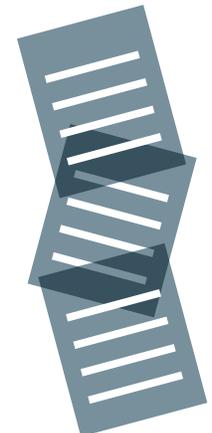
Opportunities at the intersection of lived experience and empirical evidence were selected for deeper discussion.



Group discussions among full Task Force vetted high-potential strategies, identified additional feedback needs, and surfaced potential future implementation hurdles.



Sought further community feedback and performed local analysis. Synthesized information into this report for Mayor Johnson.



# Executive Summary

With more than 200 killings, violence in 2019 has brought Dallas its worst homicide tally since 2007 — a wave of tragedies that has disproportionately impacted communities of color and that has put children as young as nine years old into caskets. The city’s grim inventory of violent crime also includes 1,000 more aggravated assaults than last year.

Law enforcement action plays a vital and out-sized role in public safety, including apprehending violent criminals, identifying crime trends, and providing a sense of order. But residents, community leaders, and city officials know that we cannot simply arrest our way out of violent crime. Non-law enforcement solutions are necessary to address some of the root causes and environmental factors that contribute to crime.

The holistic philosophy to crime reduction guided Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson when he announced the formation of this Task Force on Safe Communities on August 19, 2019.

Mayor Johnson said then that he hoped the group would “collect and analyze all of the available data, engage with key stakeholders as well as the broader Dallas community, and

then come up with specific recommendations for me and our city’s leaders to consider and implement.” During our compressed time frame, we have been involved in a concerted effort at meeting the Mayor’s request.

The recommendations we present in this report are the result of months of investigation and work on the ground to diagnose sources of violence in Dallas. These are evidence-based strategies backed by rigorous research and a track record of success in other cities, not ideas that look promising on paper but whose outcomes are hazy. Our plan was also informed by insights from the conversations of this Task Force with hundreds of people in Dallas, including residents of high-violence neighborhoods, students, community and faith leaders, families and friends of victims, police officers, and even ex-offenders.

We visited five high-violence neighborhoods to improve our shared understanding of the conditions most conducive and attractive to violence. Though Dallas police statistics show that violent crimes are scattered all over the city, when we look at the city block level — as well as walk those city blocks, talk with residents, and examine research — clear patterns emerge.

An ongoing theme for the Task Force has been the clear connections between gun violence and issues like historical disinvestment, joblessness, racial equity, gun policy, educational opportunity, and even the despair that some people feel in the most economically distressed areas of Dallas. These root-cause issues — which intersect with both places and people — must stay front-and-center for Dallas’s leaders. Yet the magnitude of our root-cause issues should be a “both-and,” not an “either-or,” when it comes to taking immediate and tangible action that will help stop the violence.

As Harvard criminologist Thomas Abt tells us in his published article, *We Can’t End Inequality Until We Stop Urban Gun Violence*, a “violence reduction program would not, by itself, solve all the problems of America’s urban poor. But anti-violence strategies are the right place to start — the tip of the spear. Long-term efforts to address root causes and reform institutions can and should be paired with short-term investments in the people, places, and behaviors that matter most for violence reduction. Dramatically reducing urban homicide is the first thing we should do.”

This report focuses primarily on four specific strategies that have research-backed, empirically supported results specific to reducing shootings and violent crimes in other cities:

---

- 1. Remediate blighted buildings and abandoned lots in high-violence locations.**
  - 2. Add outdoor lighting in locations where nighttime violence has been most severe.**
  - 3. Utilize schools to deliver group support that teaches kids to pause before they act.**
  - 4. Hire and train credible messengers from within high-violence neighborhoods as “violence interrupters” to keep resolvable conflicts from escalating into gun violence.**
- 

In the following pages, we explain what these interventions have accomplished in other major cities, and what they might do for Dallas. We used the real costs and impacts on violence pulled directly from published evaluations of each of these options.

The impact analysis given for each recommendation is made independent of other action being taken, not the overlapping effects from the implementation of all the recommendations in combination with one another. Though each intervention is research-backed and empirically shown to tamp down violence on its own, we believe that folding these recommendations into a comprehensive plan that pursues multiple strategies at once provides the greatest chance to significantly reduce violence in the hardest-hit areas.

We’ve heard from and agree with the many Dallas residents that point out our recommendations will only be as helpful as the actions that follow. City leadership’s buy-in and sustained commitment to work together are critical to the success of any of these strategies. Therefore, it is also the Task Force’s hope that policymakers will monitor the initial implementation and ongoing operations of these strategies using the same data-driven approach that guided the recommendations.

This report does not prescribe the manner in which the recommendations should be implemented. Funding and programming will likely require multiple sources of revenue — both governmental and non-governmental — and a careful selection of the right people and organizations to implement the recommendations. Such decision-making ought to be left to the appropriate policymakers.

An undertaking to address crime holistically will require a focused and sustained push from leaders across the city — both in government and in the community. The Task Force is optimistic such a collective effort is possible if we focus on both short- and long-term solutions.

As Dr. Alex Piquero, a member of the Task Force and UTD Professor of Criminology, recently noted in his Dallas Morning News opinion editorial about crime in Dallas: “Together, with data and evidence-based strategies and programs that are fully funded, continuously evaluated, and scaled up, Dallas can become a model for public safety in America.”

## **Recommendation 1:**



Remediate blighted buildings and abandoned lots in high-violence locations.



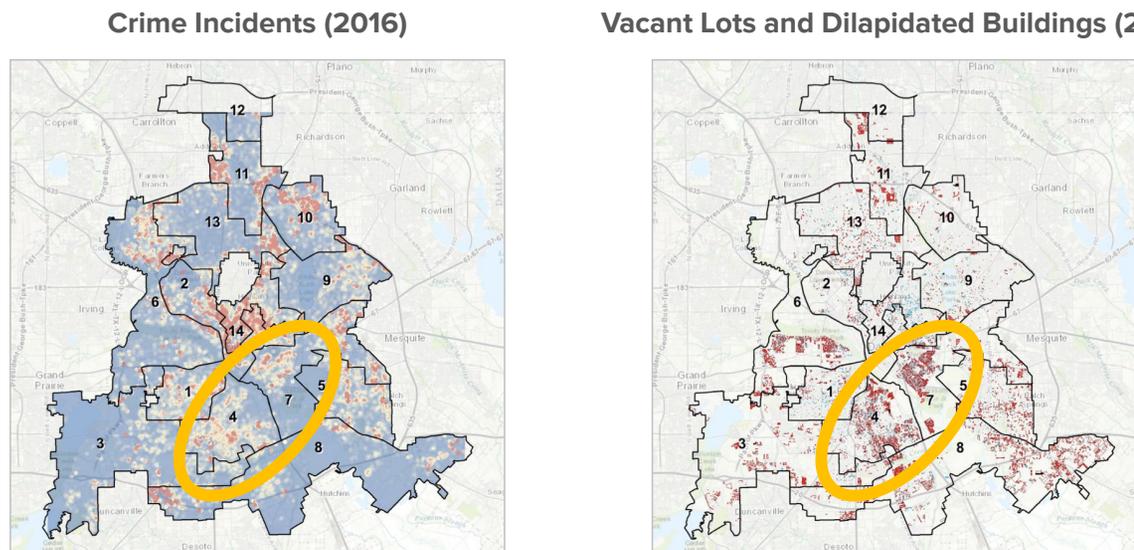
# Overview: Blight Remediation

Peeling paint, boarded-up windows and trash-strewn lawns do more than hurt neighbors' property values.

A street pockmarked with overgrown lots and plywood boards signals neglect from the local government and the private sector, inviting crime, further disorder, and instilling fear in the people who live there. Lots with overgrowth and piles of trash offer drug dealers cover from surveillance and escape routes from police. Abandoned buildings promise to conceal prostitution, drug use or worse. In some blocks, bullets fly for control of these forgotten properties.<sup>1</sup>

Several studies link urban blight with violent crime.<sup>2</sup> Areas of disinvestment attract and harbor activities that are more likely to end up in a criminal incident. Several local reports over recent years have highlighted a relationship between blight with violent crime. At a glance, it is easy to see how a heat map examining where crime occurs looks like a mirror image of a heat map of where buildings are dilapidated and lots abandoned. [See Figure 1]<sup>3</sup>

FIGURE 1



University-led research and evaluation of similar concentrations in the city of Philadelphia reveals that blight remediation strategies can be a relatively inexpensive way to reduce gun violence. In a series of studies published in the past eight years, scientists found that two separate low-cost interventions — repairs to the façades of abandoned buildings and rehabilitation of vacant lots — significantly lowered firearm violence in and around the properties. This and similar research has led blight to become a focal point of citywide investment in Philadelphia and Detroit, and led Houston, Cincinnati, and New Orleans<sup>4</sup> to accelerate programs to re-green vacant lots.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pnas.org/content/115/12/2946/tab-article-info>

<sup>2</sup> Urban blight remediation as a cost-beneficial solution to firearm violence, Brans, Kondo, Murphy, et. al

<sup>3</sup> Habitat for Humanity 2007 Mapbook

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2017/01/06/remaking-vacant-lots-to-cut-crime>



## CASE STUDY

# Philadelphia's blight remediation program reduced firearm assaults by 39%.

## Execution

Philadelphia's blight remediation program was a two-pronged effort:

1. *Buildings*: Enforced existing city ordinance requiring all vacant buildings to have working doors, windows, and a clean façade
2. *Lots*: Enforced existing anti-blight ordinance allowing the city to remediate vacant lots through building a small fence around the property, planting trees, and other general landscaping if owners were not following city ordinances

## Results

1. *Buildings*: Crime impact: 39% reduction in firearm assaults, 13% reduction in non firearm assaults; Financial impact: ~6x ROI<sup>1</sup>. **Total remediation costs \$2,550 per building, \$180 per year upkeep**
2. *Lots*: Crime impact ~5% reduction in firearm assaults, no measurable reduction in non firearm assaults; Financial impact: ~26x ROI<sup>2</sup>. **Total remediation costs are ~\$1,600 per lot, \$180 per year upkeep**

<sup>1</sup> Based on reduction of 1.7 firearm assaults per square mile per year at an estimated taxpayer cost of ~\$9,700 per firearm assault

<sup>2</sup> Based on reduction of 4.5 firearm assaults per square mile per year at an estimated taxpayer cost of ~\$9,700 per firearm assault

SOURCE: Urban blight remediation as a cost-beneficial solution to firearm violence, Brans, Kondo, Murphy, et. al

Philadelphia — a city of 1.5 million people — has invested in vacant lot revitalization since 1999. The city partners with a local nonprofit to remove debris, plant grass and trees, add post-and-rail fencing, and maintain the lots. An anti-blight ordinance allows the city to legally enter and treat unkempt private lots if their owners don't respond to a citation.

Another ordinance passed in 2010 requires that owners of abandoned buildings install working doors and windows and clean the structure façades. City inspectors visit properties in violation about once a month to assess compliance. Researchers identified 5,112 abandoned sites that had been rehabilitated and analyzed the outcomes of the interventions. They calculated cost savings to the taxpayer by accounting for police, court, and incarceration costs per assault, showing that, overwhelmingly, taxpayers save money by investing in these remediation strategies.

Their 2016 study findings:

### Abandoned building remediation

- Firearm violence plunged 39% in and around the buildings that were remediated, while non-firearm violence decreased by 13%.
- The typical cost for a building remediation was \$2,550, followed by \$180 per year for maintenance. Taxpayers get \$5 back in reduced costs from gun violence for every dollar spent on building remediation. These are just the tangible, measurable costs and do not include any changes in residents' perceptions of crime.

### Vacant lot remediation

- Firearm violence dipped 5% in and around the lots that were rehabilitated, but there was no measurable reduction in non-firearm crime.
- The typical cost for a lot remediation was \$1,597, followed by \$180 per year for maintenance. Taxpayers get \$26 back in reduced costs from gun violence for every \$1 spent on lot remediation.

A 2018 study analyzed 541 randomly selected vacant lots in Philadelphia and found a 29% drop in violent crime around the sites that had been restored. The study, which also surveyed 445 residents near the lots about their perceptions of crime and vandalism, found that three-quarters of residents self-reported significantly increased use of outdoor spaces for relaxing and socializing. The use of these spaces for positive and pro-social activity is a win-win situation for the residents of those areas as well as all stakeholders seeking solutions to the violence.



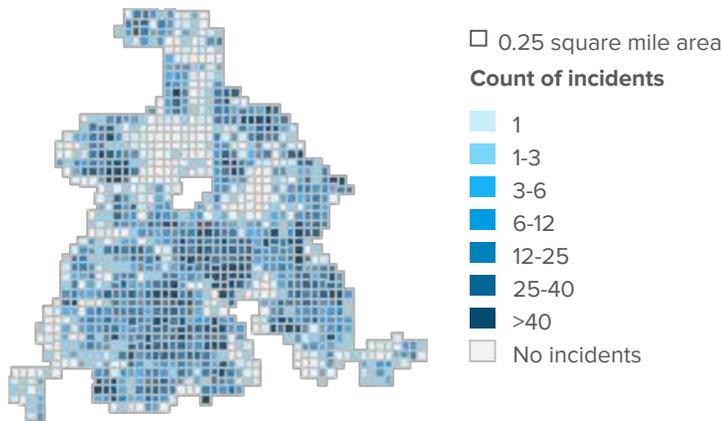
# Taking Action

*The following analysis brings a lens of local action to the cited national research. The methodologies outlined are intended to give policymakers, officials, and local leaders a starting point to improve upon for maximizing the impact of every dollar spent.*

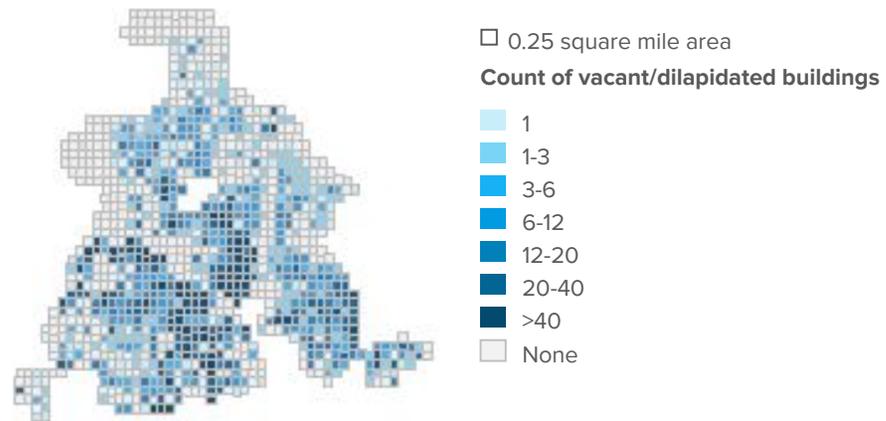
To begin the analysis, Dallas was divided into cells, each representing a surface area of 0.25 square miles. Within each cell, the number of dilapidated buildings and abandoned lots were compared with the number of violent crime events recorded by the Dallas Police Department (DPD) from 2017 through August of 2019 (when the Task Force was formed). [See Figure 2]

FIGURE 2

## Violent Crimes (2017-2019)



## Vacant Lots and Dilapidated Buildings (2019)



SOURCE: Crime data provided by Dallas Police Department  
 Analysis supported by Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL)



## Extrapolating Cost and Impact

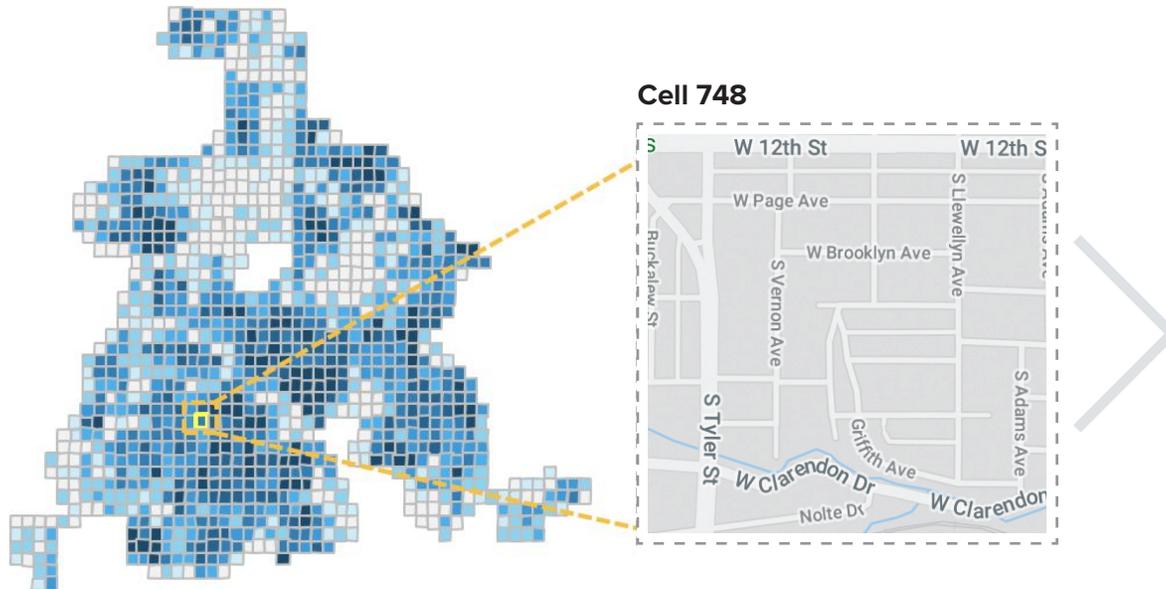
In order to provide a cost-benefit estimate with respect to the potential crime-reduction benefits of blight remediation, the documented costs and crime reductions achieved by researchers in the Philadelphia evaluation were then extrapolated and applied to each cell.

As an example, let's take a closer look at Cell 748 located in Council District 1 [See Figure 3]. In this cell, there are 13 dilapidated buildings, each with an average upfront cost of \$2,550 to provide basic improvements to the exterior like adding doors, windows, and general cleanup. Additionally, there are six unkempt or abandoned lots with an average upfront cost of \$1,597. Therefore, the total upfront cost to remediate all blight from dilapidated buildings or abandoned lots in this cell after adjusting for inflation and the difference in average construction costs between Philadelphia and Dallas is \$36,401.<sup>1</sup> Again, extrapolating from the research, the average cost of upkeep each year would be an additional \$2,913. When we combine the upfront investment with ongoing annual costs and assume a 30-year depreciation schedule, the average annual cost to end blight in this cell is \$4,127.



Example of remediations to Philadelphia property.  
Source: Penn Urban Health Lab

FIGURE 3



### Impact Calculation: Cell 748

**3.65**

reduction in violent crime incidents per year

**8.9**

reduction in violent crime incidents per \$10,000

<sup>1</sup> 2010 costs inflated by a factor of 1.15 to adjust for 2018 values; Overall construction costs in Dallas are ~26% lower than in Philadelphia; Upfront remediation cost depreciated linearly over 30 years  
Analysis supported by Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL)



According to the data provided by the Dallas Police Department (DPD), this single 0.25 square mile cell also averages 9.4 violent crime incidents per year. If we assume that the results of blight remediation from Philadelphia will hold true for Dallas, the extrapolated impact of fully remediating Cell 748 would result in an average reduction of 3.65 violent crime incidents per year. Using the same methodology over a 30-year depreciation schedule, the investment in blight remediation would achieve a reduction of 8.9 violent crime incidents for every \$10,000 spent. [See Figure 4]

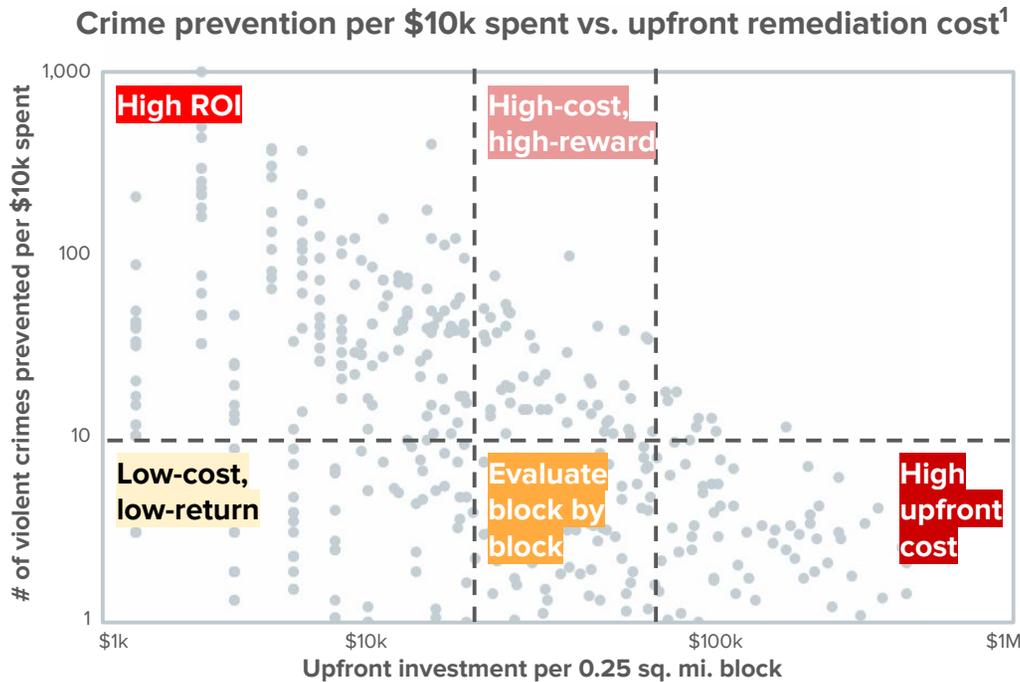
FIGURE 4

<b>Sample Calculation of Cell 748</b>		
Number of violent crimes in the highlighted block per year	9.4	Total crime incidents averaged over 2.67 years (2017 - August 2019) to get annualized number
Number of vacant residential lots in the highlighted block	6	Upfront remediation cost per vacant residential lot is \$1,597
Number of dilapidated buildings in the highlighted block	13	Upfront remediation cost per dilapidated building is \$2,550
Upfront investment for remediation	\$36,401	Multiply calculations by 1.15 to adjust for inflation. Subtract 26% to account for difference in construction costs between Philadelphia and Dallas.
Total yearly cost for upkeep	\$2,913	Upkeep cost for both is \$180/year
Total yearly cost of refurbishment	\$4,127	Total yearly cost of remediation is the sum of yearly upkeep cost and the depreciated upfront remediation cost
Reduction in violent crime incidents per year	3.65	In 0.25 square mile blocks containing one or more dilapidated buildings, 39% decrease in incidents, leveraging Philadelphia case study; In blocks containing no dilapidated buildings, 5% decrease in firearm assaults assumed exclusively due to vacant lot refurbishment
<b>Number of incidents prevented per \$10,000 spent per year</b>	<b>8.9</b>	



Finally, to help policymakers think about total upfront investment costs and rollout plan options that maximize impact, all cells were plotted on a graph to illustrate the intersection between upfront costs and potential violence reductions per \$10,000 spent. [See Figure 5] Blocks with greater than one violent crime per year were grouped into categories.

FIGURE 5



**Categories: Total Cost and Impact**

- ▶ **High ROI**
  - Upfront investment: \$812,571
  - Ongoing yearly upkeep cost: \$71,913
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 387
  
- ▶ **High-cost, high-reward**
  - Upfront investment: \$740,977
  - Ongoing yearly upkeep cost: \$68,693
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 181
  
- ▶ **Evaluate block-by-block**
  - Upfront investment: \$4,117,950
  - Ongoing yearly upkeep cost: \$407,867
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 248
  
- ▶ **High upfront cost**
  - Upfront investment: \$7,979,396
  - Ongoing yearly upkeep cost: \$833,213
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 282
  
- ▶ **Low-cost, low-return**
  - Upfront investment: \$722,834
  - Ongoing yearly upkeep cost: \$74,060
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 45

<sup>1</sup> Outliers were eliminated by analyzing data points falling within 10th to 100th percentile of all y-values. Both axes log scale to accommodate high variance in crimes and upfront cost. The cutoff along the y-axis (~11) represents 60th percentile of x-values. The cutoff(s) along the x-axis (left to right) represent 60th percentile (\$15,000) and 90th percentile (\$70,000) of x-values respectively

Analysis supported by Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL)

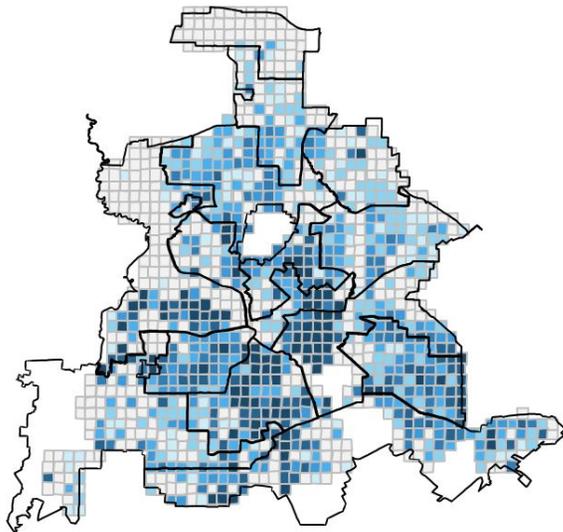


To help visualize rollout options from another perspective, we also coded the cells by category groupings back onto the map of Dallas. [See Figure 6]

FIGURE 6

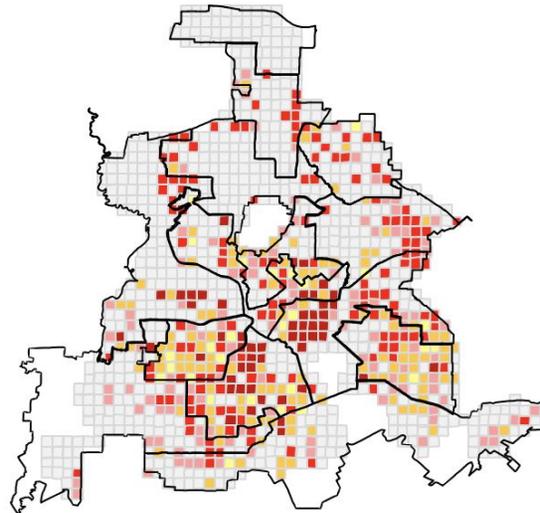
**Vacant Lots and Dilapidated buildings (2019)**

*0.25 square miles*



**Blight Category**

*0.25 square miles*



**Category**

- High ROI
- High-cost, high-reward
- Evaluate block by block
- High upfront cost
- Low-cost, low-return
- No/Low crime relative to blight



## GETTING STARTED:

- To maximize impact on violence, it would make sense to begin with cells categorized as ‘High ROI’ or ‘High-cost, High-reward’. The combined upfront cost of all 165 cells in these categories is estimated at \$1.55M. Policymakers would be well advised to set annual goals for the number of cells to be fully remediated and monitor progress via the appropriate committee structure throughout the year.
- Addressing blight can often require significant coordination across multiple departments or agencies within a municipality like Dallas. In September 2015, the Center For Community Progress issued a report in partnership with city officials entitled *Vacancy And Blight Action Plan For The City Of Dallas* with a series of thoughtful action steps to improve coordination. Since that time there have been significant changes among city staff and policymakers, so without reinventing the wheel, a review and potential update of this document by all stakeholders is advisable.
- All of the Task Force’s core recommendations should include ongoing evaluation. Over time, it is critical to know whether evidence-based strategies are being implemented as outlined in research and if public investments are yielding results. Given that the most credible evaluations are independently-funded and university-led, we encourage philanthropy to consider this as one of many ways to meaningfully support public safety in Dallas.

## **Recommendation 2:**



Add outdoor lighting in locations where nighttime violence has been most severe.

# Overview: Outdoor Lighting

**Economists and psychologists have indicated over the years that small changes to people’s immediate environments can have a great impact on their behaviors.**

That is why community members and academics alike have identified street lighting as a simple strategy to decrease crime by deterring would-be offenders. Light makes people aware of others around them and pierces the anonymity of darkness that might embolden violent action. In 2015, a report sent to the Dallas City Council cited street lighting as a top safety concern among residents.<sup>1</sup> So the need for lighting to deter crime is nothing new. However, what is new since then is research demonstrating how effective lighting can be in deterring urban violence. A recently released randomized controlled trial — the gold standard in scientific research — shows that this strategy paid off in some of New York City’s high-crime neighborhoods.

<sup>1</sup> GrowSouth: Collective Impact in Dallas, Wave 1: Southern Dallas, November 2015

CASE STUDY

# New York's lighting pilot reduced nighttime index crimes by 36%.

**Execution**

New York tested the lighting hypothesis by deploying ~397 temporary lighting towers in its public housing projects. The test was conducted over six months and cost the city ~\$5M over the course of the test. These results were then used to create a plan for permanent lighting installation.

**Results**

Compared to the unlighted developments, nighttime index crime was reduced by 36% during the six months the temporary lighting towers were in place. Since 11% of New York's index crime occurs outside and at night, this corresponds to a 4% reduction in total index crime compared to unlighted developments.

- The pilot generated a 3x ROI<sup>1</sup>
- A full-scale lighting project is estimated to generate a 4x ROI<sup>2</sup>

Though crime has plunged in New York City during the past three decades, it remains disproportionately high near public housing. Researchers partnered with the city's mayor, police department, and housing authority to test the effect that street lights in nearly 80 public housing developments have on those communities, half of which received portable floodlights over the course of the study.

These portable towers, deployed in early 2016, remained on each night for six months for a total cost of \$5 million. The study found the following over the course of the project:

- Increased lighting led to at least a 36% reduction in “index crimes” — murders, robberies, and aggravated assaults, as well as certain property crimes — that took place outdoors, at night, in the developments with the light towers.
- The 36% reduction is a conservative estimate that includes crime statistics from a two-block radius around the development to account for potential crime spillover. Setting aside the spillover effect, the study estimated that the lights reduced outdoor nighttime index crimes by as much as 60 percent.



Improved outdoor lighting in NYC around Castle Hills in the Bronx.  
Source: NYCHA

<sup>1</sup> Based on an estimated \$770,000 cost of crime per development. Lighting costs were \$258,000 per development.

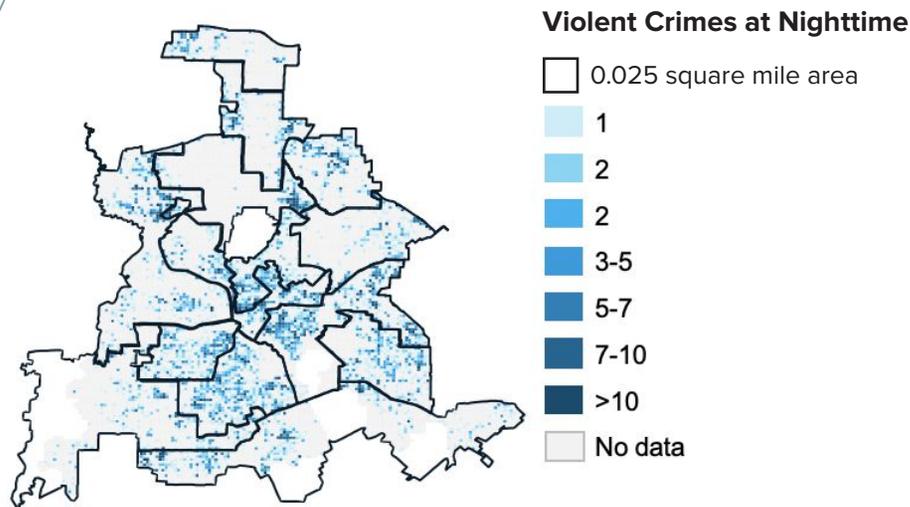
<sup>2</sup> Based on \$4M initial lighting investment and \$15k annual electricity costs  
SOURCE: Reducing Crime Through Environmental Design, CrimeLab NY

# Taking Action

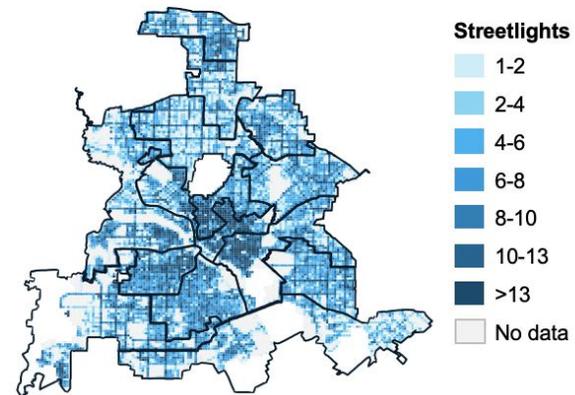
*The following analysis brings a lens of local action to the cited national research. The methodologies outlined are intended to give policymakers, officials, and local leaders a starting point to improve upon for maximizing the impact of every dollar spent.*

To begin the analysis, Dallas was divided into 0.025 square mile cells. Layers were added over the grid of cells to determine the average number of violent crimes occurring during nighttime, the number of streetlights owned by the City of Dallas (and other government agency partners), and the number of streetlights owned by Oncor within each cell. [See Figure 7]

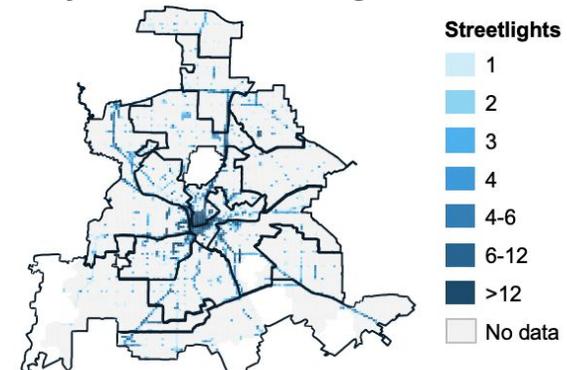
FIGURE 7



**ONCOR Streetlight Data<sup>1</sup>**



**City of Dallas Streetlight Data<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Data provided by City of Dallas Transportation Department after permission provided by Oncor

<sup>2</sup> Data provided by City of Dallas Transportation Department

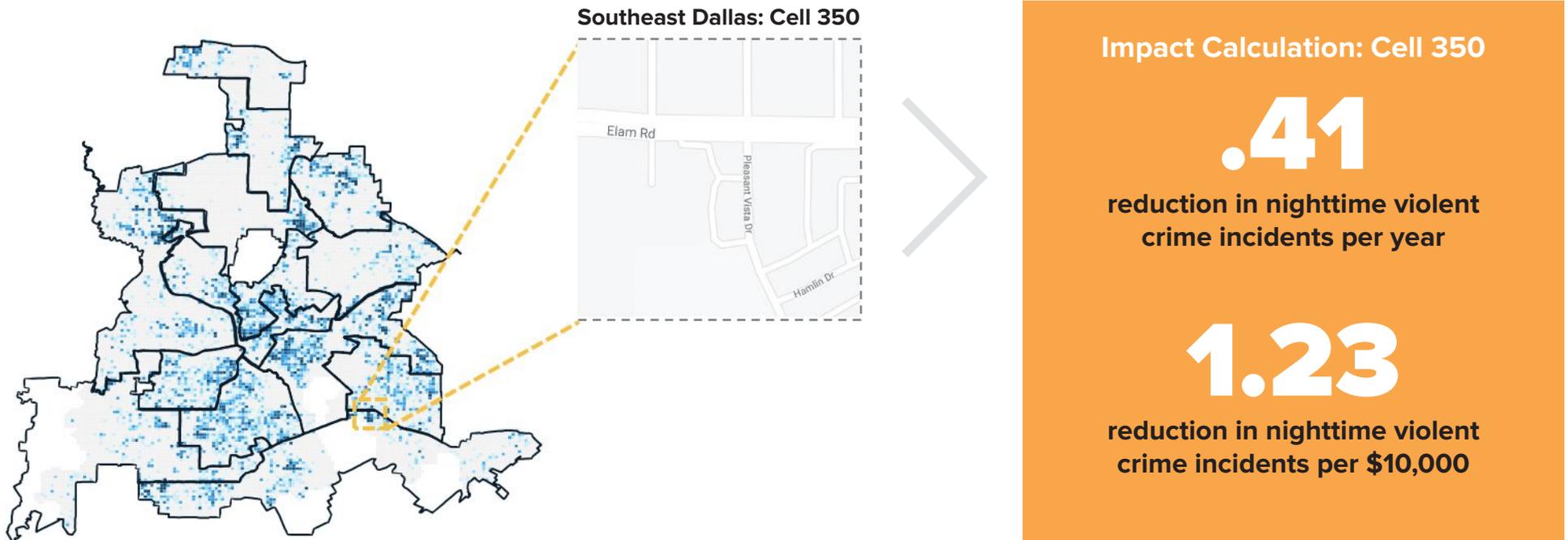
SOURCE: Crime data provided by Dallas Police Department

Analysis supported by Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL)

Each cell was then coded as “well lit” or “dark” based on the number of streetlights within the 0.025 square mile area. To ensure a common definition, any cell containing 12 or more streetlights was determined to be well lit. To determine costs and potential impact, we looked at cells categorized as “dark” that also had levels of violent crime incidents at night.

For example, Cell #350 in Southeast Dallas only contains eight streetlights. [See Figure 8]

FIGURE 8



## Extrapolating Cost and Impact

To add four new LED lighting towers would cost \$6,000 per unit or a total upfront cost of \$24,000. It is also estimated that an additional \$920 per year would need to be added for the cost of electricity and upkeep of the four new lighting towers.

According to DPD data, this cell also has been averaging 2.54 violent crime incidents at night per year. Taking the actual results of the NYC evaluation, the lighting investment in this cell would have an extrapolated impact of reducing nighttime violence by an average of .41 incidents per year. And after annualizing the upfront cost over a 10-year period, the return on investment calculation is an average reduction of 1.23 incidents of nighttime violence per \$10,000 spent. [See Figure 9]

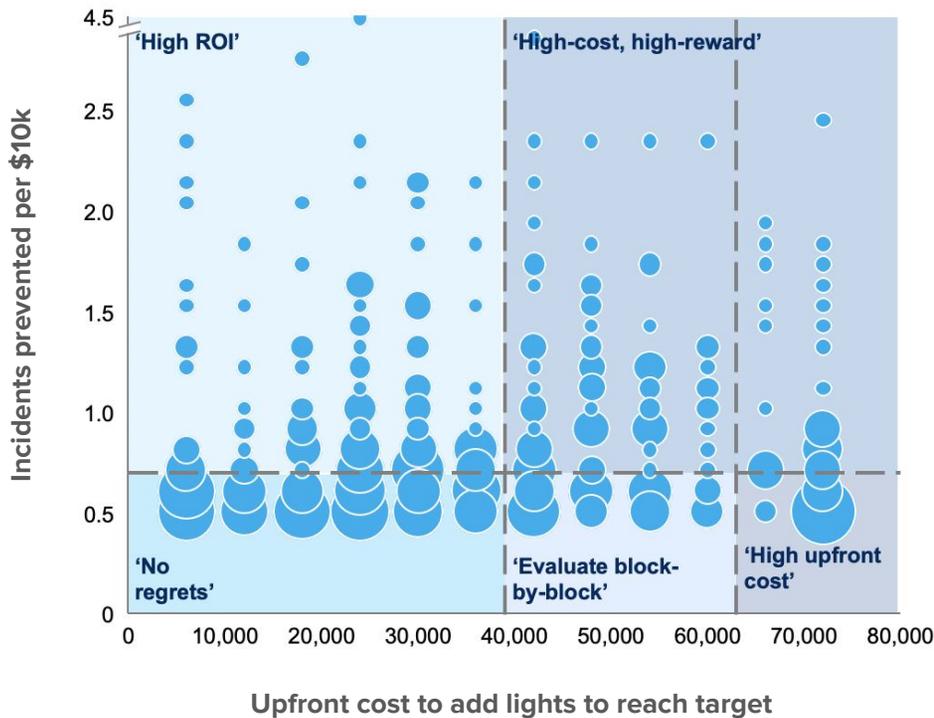
FIGURE 9

Sample Calculation of Cell 350		
Number of nighttime outdoor violent crimes in grid 350 per year	2.54	Total nighttime crime incidents averaged over 2.67 years (2017 - August 2019) to get annualized number. 12,550 grid blocks with 0.025 square mile area
Number of streetlights in the highlighted block	8	Merged ONCOR and City of Dallas streetlight data
Number of streetlights added to reach 75th percentile	4	75th streetlight percentile for 0.025 square mile grid is 12 lights
Total upfront cost for permanent lighting development upgrade	\$24k	\$6,000 cost per light associated with materials and installation
Total annual cost of electricity and maintenance for permanent lighting development upgrade	\$920	\$230 cost per light associated with electricity and maintenance
Reduction in nighttime outdoor violent crime incidents per year	0.41	NYC study: 36-60% reduction in nighttime outdoor violent crime in target areas after accounting for potential spillover during NYC pilot. Block impact scaled based on added lights (e.g. one light = 1/12 of expected impact)
<b>Number of incidents prevented per \$10,000 spent on permanent upgrades per year</b>	<b>1.23</b>	Upfront cost annualized over 10-year period

Next, to help policymakers think about total upfront investment costs and rollout plan options for maximizing impact, “dark” cells with nighttime violence were plotted on a graph to illustrate the intersection between upfront costs and potential violence reductions per \$10,000 spent. [See Figure 10]

FIGURE 10

**Crime Prevention per \$10k Spent vs. Upfront Lighting Cost**  
*>1 nighttime outdoor violent crime per year sites*



**Categories: Total Cost and Impact**

- ▶ **High ROI**
  - Upfront investment: \$2,190,000
  - Yearly electricity and upkeep cost: \$83,950
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 38
- ▶ **No Regrets**
  - Upfront investment: \$3,000,000
  - Yearly electricity and upkeep cost: \$115,000
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 25
- ▶ **High-cost, high-reward**
  - Upfront investment: \$5,226,000
  - Yearly electricity and upkeep cost: \$200,330
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 92
- ▶ **Evaluate block by block**
  - Upfront investment: \$2,874,000
  - Yearly electricity and upkeep cost: \$110,170
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 23
- ▶ **High upfront cost**
  - Upfront investment: \$2,334,000
  - Yearly electricity and upkeep cost: \$89,470
  - Number of violent crimes prevented: 19

Analysis supported by Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL)

## GETTING STARTED:

- One approach to accelerate this process would be to utilize temporary lighting towers (exactly like the ones used in the NYC study) to launch a fast pilot in some of the city blocks where nighttime violence with firearms is highest and lighting is needed. While the temporary lighting towers are more expensive (\$11,997 per unit), it would allow Dallas to move fast and re-utilize the temporary lighting in the future to stay nimble and pilot additional sites. If modeled closely to the NYC study, the extrapolated impact of a \$4.8M investment across 41 sites would be a reduction of 25 incidents of gun violence over a 6-month period. [See Figure 11]

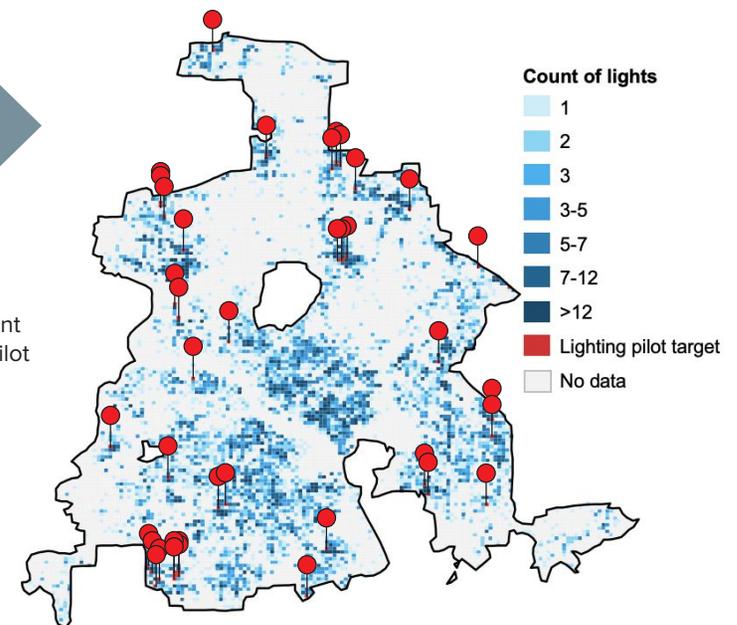
### Outdoor Lighting Pilot

A temporary lighting pilot would be executed in a similar fashion to the NYC study.



- All of the Task Force’s core recommendations should include ongoing evaluation. Over time, it is critical to know whether evidence-based strategies are being implemented as outlined in research and if public investments are yielding results. Given that the most credible evaluations are independently-funded and university-led, we encourage philanthropy to consider this as one of many ways to meaningfully support public safety in Dallas.

FIGURE 11



## Recommendation 3:



Utilize schools to deliver group support that teaches kids to pause before they act.



# Overview: Supports at Schools

**As Yale sociologist Eli Anderson noted in his critically acclaimed book, *Code of the Streets*, some children grow up in neighborhoods where the expectation is that aggression will be met with aggression.**

You fight, or you risk the reputation of being an easy victim. Maintaining one's respect, typically using interpersonal violence, is all that matters to the detriment of the long-term consequences of one's actions.

Fighting can become an automatic response to real or perceived provocations. Even conflicts that start out about trivial issues too often escalate to the point of fatal consequences.

In recent years, schools across Dallas have thoughtfully integrated social-emotional learning into their academic mission: schools now intentionally teach lessons to students about mindfulness, responsible decision-making, self-awareness, relationship skills, and more. All students need and benefit from these skills. However, for students at high risk of finding themselves in violent surroundings, an even deeper investment to provide small group support through our schools that teach the benefits of slowing down thoughts and actions may be life-saving.



## CASE STUDY

# In Chicago Public Schools, specialized support led to a crime reduction by participating students of **49%.**

## Execution

- Sister programs developed by a Chicago nonprofit teach teens from struggling areas to recognize and handle their emotions with cognitive behavioral therapy techniques.
- The counseling program tailored for boys — Becoming A Man (BAM) — focuses on impulse control, emotional self-regulation, social cues, and personal responsibility and integrity. The program for girls — Working On Womanhood (WOW) — emphasizes coping with trauma.

## Results

The first trial looked at outcomes for 2,740 youths and one academic year of BAM. The second test considered more than 2,000 teens and two years of BAM. Researchers divided the teens into two camps — with and without BAM — to compare results and found:

- BAM reduced participants' total arrests by 28% to 35% and violent-crime arrests by 45% to 50% during the intervention period.
- The high school graduation rate of the first group increased by up to 19%.

The third trial evaluated the outcomes for nearly 2,700 male detainees at the Cook County JTDC and found that the behavioral curriculum reduced readmission rates by 21%.

### Chicago's Becoming A Man (BAM) Program

Sister programs developed by a Chicago nonprofit teach teens from distressed neighborhoods to recognize and handle their emotions with cognitive behavioral therapy techniques. The counseling program tailored for boys — Becoming A Man, or BAM — focuses on impulse control, emotional self-regulation, recognition of social cues, and developing a sense of personal responsibility and integrity. The program for girls — Working On Womanhood, or WOW — emphasizes coping with trauma, but has yet to be subject to rigorous empirical research.

A key lesson for participants is how to slow down their thoughts and actions, i.e., how to counteract the impulse to behave automatically by instead pausing, assessing the situation, and ultimately making wise choices. These are necessary skills for all children to develop in order to succeed in education, the workforce, and within interpersonal relationships, but they can be life-saving for kids growing up around violence.

The program promotes positive psychological development, builds resiliency, and teaches critical behavior skills for students with risk factors like suspensions, truancy, drug or alcohol abuse, gang involvement, and violence.

Similar strategies are being used throughout Canada, and increasingly in the United States, modeled after the Stop Now and Plan (SNAP) strategy, which has received strong support for improving self-control and decision-making and reducing aggression and delinquency.

Still led by an area nonprofit, BAM is now in many Chicago Public Schools (CPS) sites. Students meet for weekly group sessions at school, where a counselor who specializes in psychology or social work guides them through conversations and exercises. These activities are lessons on decision-making, not lectures on the “right thing” to do. In the case of BAM, providers recognize that teens live in places that will push them to stand up for themselves, but the message is that fighting should be a last resort. For example, in “the fist” exercise, BAM participants are asked to get a ball from a partner in 30 seconds. Many boys try to use force, but after the exercise, questioning from the counselor shows most of those boys' partners would have handed over the ball if asked nicely.

A similar program was launched at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC) in Cook County, where high-risk juvenile detainees from the Chicago area await trial.

Researchers conducted randomized controlled trials — among the most rigorous kind of scientific evaluation — to study the impact of BAM and the JTDC curriculum on crime.

The first trial looked at outcomes for 2,740 youths and one academic year of BAM programming in 2009-10. The second test considered more than 2,000 teens and two years of BAM programming in 2013-15. The researchers divided the teens into two camps — the group that got BAM programming and the group that didn't — to compare results and found:

- BAM reduced participants' total arrests by 28% to 35% and violent-crime arrests by 45% to 50% during the intervention period.
- The high school graduation rate of the first group increased by up to 19%.

The third trial evaluated the outcomes for nearly 2,700 male detainees at the Cook County JTDC from late 2009 to early 2011. That analysis found that the behavioral curriculum reduced readmission rates by 21%.



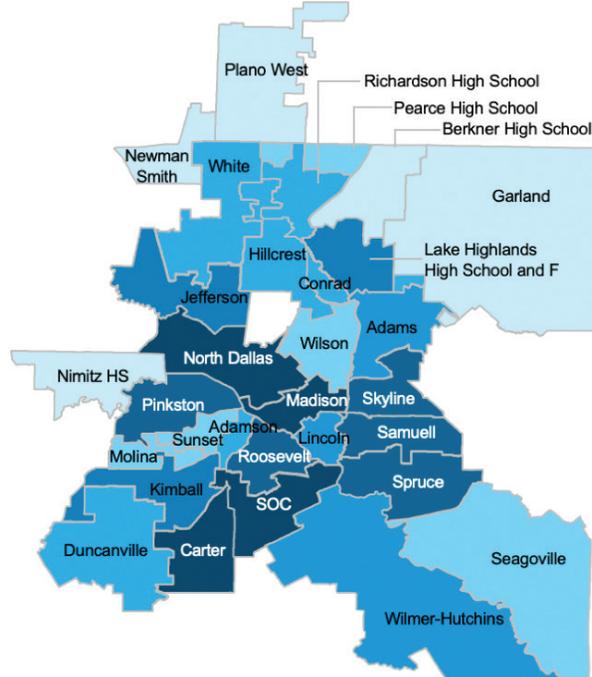
# Taking Action

*The following analysis brings a lens of local action to the cited national research. The methodologies outlined are intended to give policymakers, officials, and local leaders a starting point to improve upon for maximizing the impact of every dollar spent.*

To begin the analysis, Dallas was split into 31 high school attendance zones utilizing shapefiles from Dallas ISD and Richardson ISD. Data provided by DPD indicating the location of juvenile violent crime incidents were then layered into the map. [See Figure 12]

FIGURE 12

### Juvenile Violent Crime Incidents



BAM: Small group support session in CPS schools.  
Source: Youth Guidance

SOURCE: Crime data provided by Dallas Police Department  
Analysis supported by Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL)



## Extrapolating Cost and Impact

While many factors are likely to determine which schools would be best for an initial rollout of a program providing the small group support intervention, we'll illustrate the cost and extrapolated impact by examining the budget for a single school.

In the Chicago study, the average cost of the BAM program after adjusting for inflation was \$1,740.50 per student. If 200 students are served at a given school annually, the program cost per year would total \$348,000. Additionally, the extrapolated impact would be an average reduction of 16.6 juvenile violence incidents per year or .49 incidents per \$10,000 spent. [See Figure 13]

FIGURE 13

Sample Calculation Per Site		
Number of male students participating in program	200	Chicago BAM: Sites generally serve 200+ male students
Total annual program cost	\$348,000	Chicago BAM: Average cost per student is \$1,740.50
Reduction in violent crime incidents per year	16.6	Chicago BAM program estimates 48.8% reduction in violent crime arrests for participating students
<b>Number of incidents prevented per \$10,000 spent</b>	<b>0.49</b>	



### Impact Calculation: Per Site

**16.6**

reduction in violent crimes involving a juvenile per year

**.49**

reduction in violent crimes involving a juvenile per \$10,000



## GETTING STARTED:

- City and Dallas ISD officials already have ongoing collaborative meetings. An immediate first step would be for a select set of officials from those meetings to take a trip to Chicago to jointly study the BAM program and all operational requirements.
- As is often the case with new programs, starting small with a pilot at two to three sites will allow for operations and program supports to be optimized. It will also allow for corresponding evaluation to inform scaling decisions.
- All of the Task Force's core recommendations should include ongoing evaluation. Over time, it is critical to know whether evidence-based strategies are being implemented as outlined in research and if public investments are yielding results. Given that the most credible evaluations are independently-funded and university-led, we encourage philanthropy to consider this as one of many ways to meaningfully support public safety in Dallas.

## Recommendation 4:



Hire and train credible messengers from within high-violence neighborhoods as “violence interrupters” to keep resolvable conflicts from escalating into gun violence.



# Overview: Violence Interrupters

In communities severely affected by crime, anything from a fight over gang turf to a perceived insult can set off a chain of retaliatory attacks. Many experts now advocate for interventions to stop the violence from spreading, treating it like a contagious disease. A crime prevention strategy, most prominently known as Cure Violence, deploys credible neighborhood residents to contain disputes before they turn deadly.

**Unlike many other programs that focus on gang violence, the Cure Violence model doesn't rely on professional social workers or law enforcement.**

It hires and trains people from the target neighborhoods, many of them former gang members and ex-offenders, to be “violence interrupters” and “outreach workers.” Violence interrupters chat with their sources on the street and with people at crime scenes to identify conflicts and intervene.

Meanwhile, outreach workers proactively mentor potential offenders and connect them with services such as job training and drug treatment. The workers' backgrounds and independence from law enforcement help them build trust in their neighborhoods.

Researchers have now studied programs using the Cure Violence model extensively. While this model is only implemented at the neighborhood level (not the city level), researchers have linked locations within Chicago, Baltimore, NYC, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and more to significant drops in homicides and shootings in participating neighborhoods. High profile initiatives utilizing violence interrupters to implement the Cure Violence model have recently launched in St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Jacksonville.

CASE STUDY

In Chicago's Cure Violence neighborhoods, violence interrupters reduced homicides by **38%.**

**Execution**

- Began with objective of reducing homicide rates by 10%
- Key pillars included street and educational interventions, clergy involvement, and community partnerships
- Each site had outreach workers and violence interrupters with inside knowledge and unique credibility regarding firearm-related crimes
- Program was largely implemented in two districts (District 3 and District 10) covering 20% of "violent communities"

**Results**

- Raw data suggests a reduction of 31% in homicide rates and 19% in shootings when accounting for the effects of the generally declining crime rates in the city
- Cure Violence interventions were associated with a 38% greater decrease in homicides and a 15% greater decrease in overall shootings
- 536 fewer shootings were recorded January 2013 - February 2015, aided by generally declining crime
- Crime reductions were lost to new violence when the program was defunded in early 2015

**Cure Violence in Chicago Neighborhoods**

In 2012, the city of Chicago began a contract to fund Cure Violence — previously known as Ceasefire, which is confusing since it is a different program model than another well-known initiative with the same moniker that has received significant attention recently in Dallas — in two neighborhood sites spanning approximately three square miles each. The goal was to reduce homicides and shootings by 10%. Beyond just the violence interrupters and outreach workers, Chicago's implementation also leaned on public education campaigns and community mobilization efforts such as marches, rallies, and prayer vigils. Community partnerships and clergy involvement were meaningful additions to their efforts.

A study published in 2014 found the following:

- Data showed a reduction of 31% in homicides and 19% in shootings in these districts, much greater than expected based on declining crime trends in the city as a whole.
- A 38% greater decrease in homicides and 15% greater decrease in overall shootings in the two districts receiving the program compared to districts that didn't receive the intervention.

Chicago's Cure Violence efforts have struggled with inconsistent funding since its launch. Citing police data, an analysis by program founder Dr. Gary Slutkin and four other researchers pointed to an increase in Chicago shooting rates after the state of Illinois cut funding in early 2015.

SOURCE: "Evaluation of Baltimore's Safe Streets Program: Effects on Attitudes, Participants' Experiences, and Gun Violence, 2012



## CASE STUDY

# In Baltimore's Safe Streets, violence interrupters reduced homicides in Cherry Hill by **56%.**

## Execution

- Configured as an outreach program based on the "Cure Violence" model utilized in Chicago
- Launched in McElderry Park in East Baltimore and expanded into Madison-Eastend, Elwood Park, Cherry Hill
- Targeted at-risk youth in four most violent neighborhoods
- 80% of interviewed participants (N=55) reported amelioration in their lives since becoming a Safe Streets participant

## Results

- Between July 2007 and end of 2010, outreach workers helped mediate 276 incidents in neighborhoods that would very likely (59.5%) or likely (24.6%) have resulted in a shooting
- In Cherry Hill, the program was associated with a 56% reduction in homicide rates and 34% reduction in non-fatal shootings
- McElderry Park and Cherry Hill participant interviews suggested that two-thirds of participants received help on a range of matters including job interviewing skills (75%), getting into a school or GED program (95%), and resolving family conflicts (100%) from outreach workers

## Safe Streets in Baltimore

Baltimore's Safe Streets, modeling after Cure Violence in Chicago, focuses more explicitly on at-risk youths ages 14 to 25. The program works on building relationships with gang members and shooting victims and also relies on community partnerships to prevent violence.

A study released in 2012 by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Health looked at the outcomes in four neighborhoods targeted by the program:

- Three of the four neighborhoods experienced "large, statistically significant" reductions in homicides and violent shootings. In the Cherry Hill neighborhood, the program's implementation was associated with a 56% reduction in homicides and a 34% drop in non-fatal shootings.

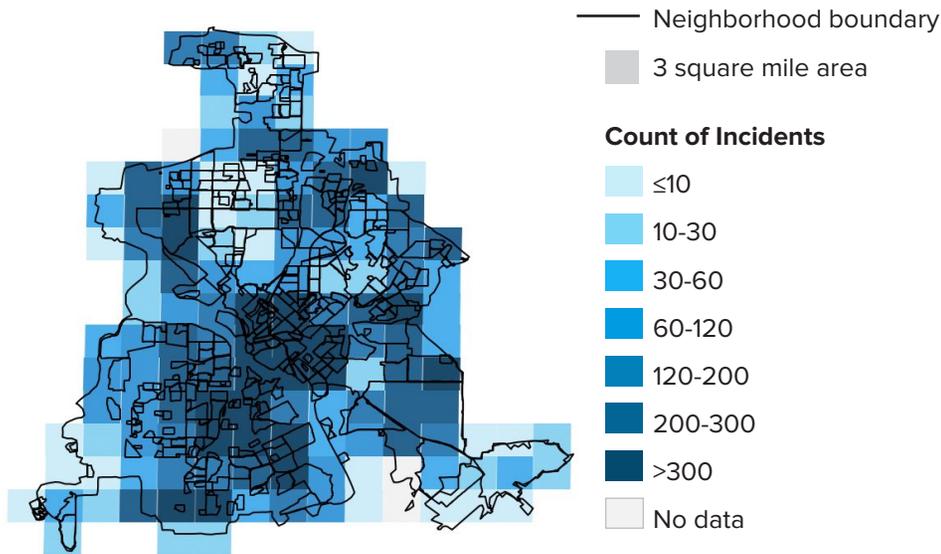
- Between July 2007 and December 2010, Safe Streets outreach workers helped mediate 276 incidents in program neighborhoods that would "very likely" (59.5%) or "likely" (24.6%) have resulted in a shooting.
- Eighty percent of program clients reported that their lives were better as a result of the program.
- Most clients reported receiving assistance finding a job (88%), getting into a school or GED program (95%), and resolving family conflicts (100%).

# Taking Action

*The following analysis brings a lens of local action to the cited national research. The methodologies outlined are intended to give policymakers, officials, and local leaders a starting point to improve upon for maximizing the impact of every dollar spent.*

Most of the neighborhoods studied in the Cure Violence and Safe Streets research did not exceed more than a few square miles. So to begin the analysis, Dallas was divided into 137 cells, each representing a surface area of three square miles and layered over a neighborhood map developed by bcWorkshop. Utilizing data provided by DPD, each cell was then coded to represent the number of violent crimes involving firearms from 2017 through August of 2019 (when the Task Force was formed). [See Figure 14]

FIGURE 14



SOURCE: Crime data provided by Dallas Police Department

## Extrapolating Cost and Impact

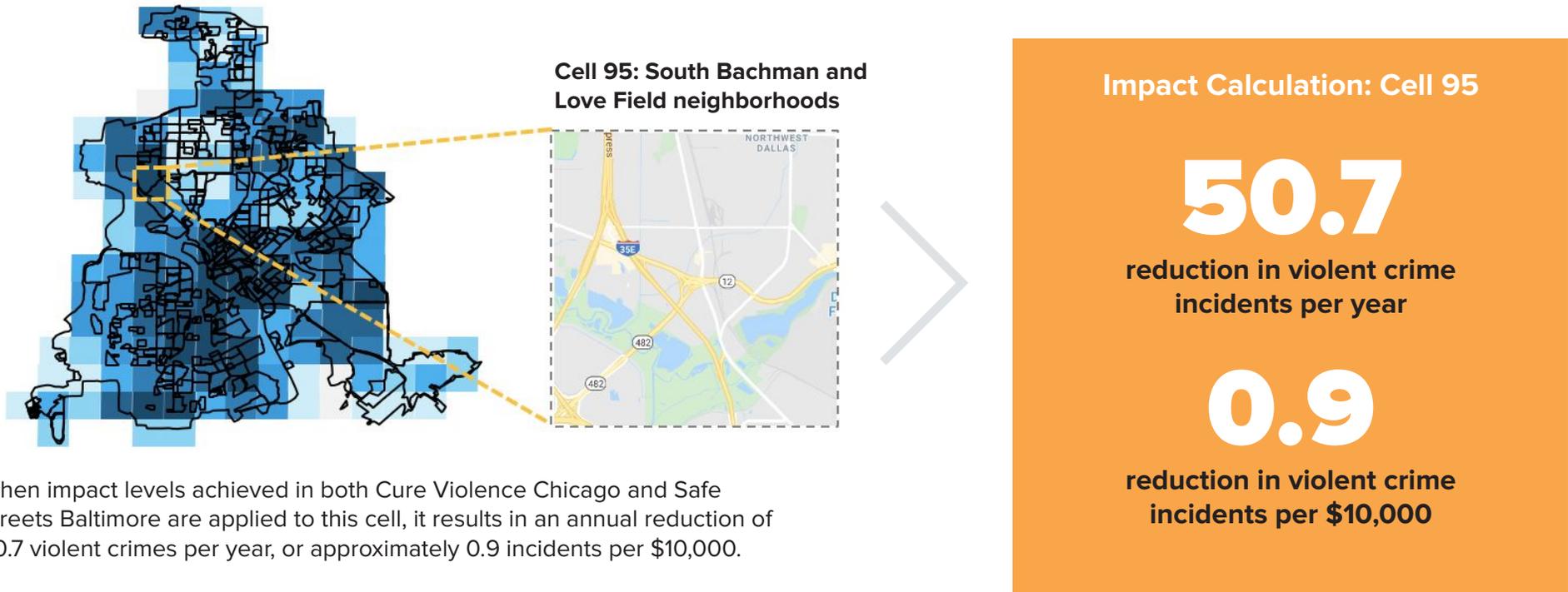
The level of funding needed in the Cure Violence and Safe Streets models can largely be attributed to the size of the neighborhood being covered. For example, in Chicago’s Cure Violence neighborhoods, every three square miles required an average spend of 187,000 on Violence Interrupters and \$240,000 on Outreach Workers. Once an adjustment is made to bring those totals to present-day value, the estimated cost per site in Dallas will be \$593,750.



Community rally in a Cure Violence neighborhood.  
 Source: CVG

To determine potential impact, a closer look was given to cells with high rates of violent crime incidents. For example, Cell 95 in South Bachman Lake averages 169 violent crime incidents involving a firearm per year. [See Figure 15]

FIGURE 15



When impact levels achieved in both Cure Violence Chicago and Safe Streets Baltimore are applied to this cell, it results in an annual reduction of 50.7 violent crimes per year, or approximately 0.9 incidents per \$10,000.

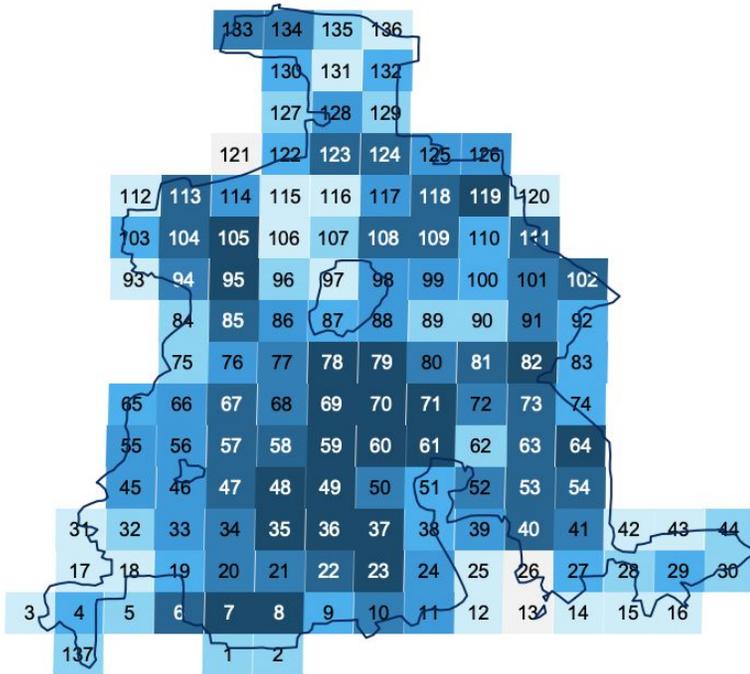
FIGURE 16

Sample Calculation for Cell 95		
Number of violent crimes in grid area per year	169	Total crime incidents averaged over 2.67 years (2017 - August 2019) to get annualized number
Reduction in violent crime per year	50.7	Number of firearm related incidents expected to decrease by at least 30% based on Operation Ceasefire in Chicago and Safe Streets program in Baltimore
Expected yearly cost of outreach per three square miles	\$593,750	On average, Cure Violence sites in Chicago used \$240,000 per site on outreach workers and \$187,000 per site for violence interrupters per three square miles in year 2000 dollars
<b>Number of incidents prevented per \$10,000 spent per year</b>	<b>0.9</b>	

Analysis supported by Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL)

Many considerations must be taken into account when selecting pilot sites for a strategy modeled after Cure Violence and Safe Streets. However, based solely on extrapolated impact, the following 20 cells should get consideration from policymakers and city leaders moving forward. [See Figure 17]

FIGURE 17



Grid ID	Neighborhood description	Yearly criminal incidents	Average yearly decrease in crime per \$10,000 spent	Expected yearly decrease in incidents
70	Cedars, Baylor/Meadows, Deep Ellum, Park Row	233.33	1.2	70.00
37	Oak Cliff Gardens, Fruitdale	203.00	1.0	60.90
79	Bryan Place, Fitzhugh	173.78	0.9	52.13
119	Woodbridge	172.28	0.9	51.69
82	Eastwood Hills, Hillview Trace	170.41	0.9	51.12
60	Edgewood Place, Forrest Heights	168.91	0.9	50.67
95	Bachman, Love Field	168.91	0.9	50.67
35	Wynnewood Heights, Kiest-Polk, Oak Park Estates	167.04	0.8	50.11
69	Reunion District, West End Historic District, Main St.	166.29	0.8	49.89
64	Pleasant Mound	159.55	0.8	47.87
71	Dolphin Heights, Frazier, Mill City	146.82	0.7	44.04
49	The Heights, Cedarhaven, Cedar Crest	144.94	0.7	43.48
61	Sunny Acres, Dixon Circle Bertrand, Rose Garden	143.07	0.7	42.92
7	Unity Estates	141.57	0.7	42.47
36	Cedar Crest Village, Liberty Heights	140.82	0.7	42.25
78	Uptown, Oak Lawn, Turtle Creek, Victory Park	128.84	0.7	38.65
48	Ruthmeade Place, Wynnewood North	125.47	0.6	37.64
23	Cigarette Hill, Highland Hills, Arden Terrace	121.35	0.6	36.40
59	The Bottoms, Tenth Street, Cedars	116.10	0.6	34.83
105	North Bachman, Cityplace, Roseland	115.36	0.6	34.61
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3,108</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>932</b>



## GETTING STARTED:

- Based on community feedback and discussions with city officials, there is significant confusion in distinguishing between the violence interrupter model most prominently promoted by Cure Violence and models of focused deterrence that utilize some similar tactics but also rely heavily on law enforcement strategies. The confusion is a result of both models demonstrating a significant impact in published evaluations, and both models sometimes being operated under the moniker Ceasefire. It is important to note that the two models have been successfully implemented in parallel to one another in other cities, so there is no need to choose one strategy over the other. However, as a starting point, it would be wise for city officials to visit locations where the violence interrupter model is being run effectively to fully understand the nuances and operating principles.
- It is recommended that a competitive bidding process be developed to identify independent organizations that can oversee investment in the program. Feedback from other Cure Violence-style programs indicate that the perception of reporting up to the police or city government can undermine the credibility and effectiveness of Violence Interrupters.
- All of the Task Force's core recommendations should include ongoing evaluation. Over time, it is critical to know whether evidence-based strategies are being implemented as outlined in research and if public investments are yielding results. Given that the most credible evaluations are independently-funded and university-led, we encourage philanthropy to consider this as one of many ways to meaningfully support public safety in Dallas.

# Additional Opportunities: Going beyond the core recommendations

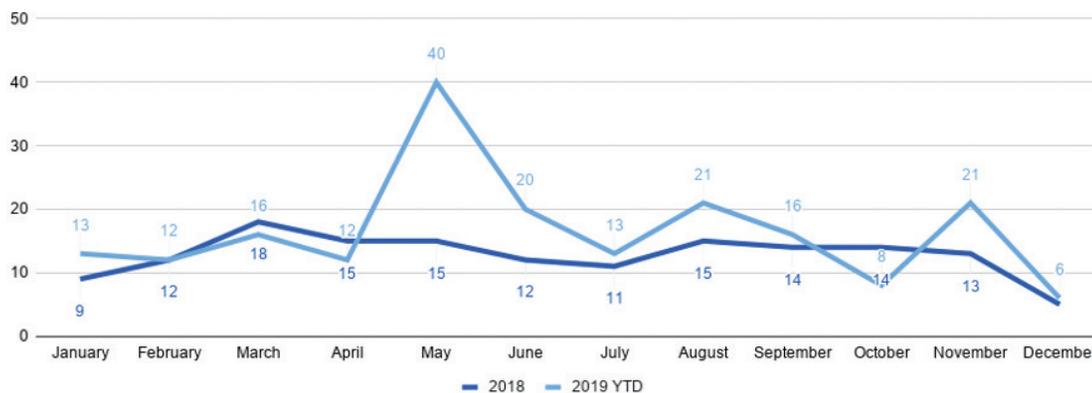
Our four core recommendations all have strong empirical evidence for reducing violence that have been documented in university-led evaluations. Yet many other important themes and thoughtful ideas for solutions have surfaced through our process. The following are a few highlights of themes that emerged prominently:

**While all violence is tragic, many members of the community were especially impacted by violence that reaches children.** Several neighborhood groups and Task Force members have specifically been calling for increasing out of school time opportunities that give kids positive activities to focus on. In particular, the Task Force encourages city leaders to look at opportunities to increase activities at the beginning of summer when kids are transitioning out of school. A quick look at year-over-year data by month shows that the story of homicide increases in 2019 can largely be attributed to May. [See Figure 18]

To that end, several community voices emphasized how more summer jobs programs would be impactful. Summer jobs would also create a positive economic incentive for kids to stay away from violence. Care must be taken that these jobs are not only offered as an opportunity to the highest performers in a given school, but to those kids most likely to otherwise feel like they have “nothing to lose.”

FIGURE 18

## Homicides – 2018 v 2019 YTD<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> 2019 YTD data includes all homicides through 12/19/19

**Throughout the past several months, Task Force members have heard countless stories about the important work of many local nonprofits and faith-based organizations.** We encourage philanthropy to double-down on support for organizations that keep public safety central to their mission. And just as we have with our core recommendations, we encourage the use of independent evaluation to help Dallas get smarter and more effective as a collective.

Additionally, there are many local organizations well-positioned to make significant contributions to the four core recommendations. However, we felt it wise not to highlight one local organization over any other that we may be less familiar with. It is critical that there not even be the perception of favoritism or “friends helping friends” if any competitive bidding processes are later launched in connection with this Task Force report.

**Gun policy is a controversial issue that too often is framed through a purely political lens, but it consistently ranks high among concerns raised by citizens of Dallas and communities throughout the United States.**

The core recommendations of the Task Force specifically focus on strategies that have been shown to reduce urban gun violence, which should be distinguished from other categories often included in gun policy discussions like mass shootings, suicide, and domestic violence. Moreover, our recommendations are all actionable with local authority. We recognize that Dallas leaders only have so much control over gun policy, which is often set at the state level. Therefore, we encourage Dallas leaders to develop an advocacy platform that aggressively promotes greater local control over policy levers needed to most effectively reduce violence, including those related to firearms.

**Finally, as mentioned in our introduction, many of our discussions and conversations have centered on intersecting root cause issues.** For example, access to basic needs, healthcare, and living-wage jobs can all be correlated to levels of crime. Likewise, deep interdependencies exist across the operations of our city departments and the policy decisions of our elected officials. To help keep public safety investments as comprehensive and coordinated as possible, we encourage all City Council committees to schedule discussions centered on public safety outcomes. Furthermore, we specifically encourage the Public Safety Committee to research the investments in data-infrastructure and ongoing analysis being made by other major cities as part of their violence reduction plans. Wherever possible, our safety data should be increasingly comprehensive, user-friendly, and universally accessible to benefit all other City Council committees, local organizations, and stakeholders ready to help Dallas become a model of safe communities.

## The Cost of Inaction...

It is indisputable that taking all necessary action to stop violence in our streets is the right thing to do. However, given that the core strategies we recommend are accompanied with real budgeting implications for now and the future, **we spent time as a Task Force weighing the cost of inaction against the cost of taking action.** Of course, the greatest toll is paid by the neighborhoods and communities most directly impacted. Yet it is also important to point out that everyone in Dallas has a moral and economic interest in seeing violence stop. **Depending on which of the top three most cited studies one chooses to point to, the cost to society of each murder committed ranges between \$10-20 million.** Yes, the cost to society broadly is different than the cost to any single government entity that must bare the upfront costs, but it is crystal clear to this Task Force that prioritizing our budget to focus on evidence-backed actions for reducing violence and murder is within our collective best interest.

## In Conclusion:

As we submit our findings and analysis to Mayor Johnson, it is important to re-emphasize that an undertaking to address public safety holistically will require a focused and sustained push from leaders across the city – both in government and throughout our neighborhoods. The core recommendations offered by the Task Force are informed by community expertise, meet high standards of research and evaluation, and include tangible steps to begin taking action both in the short- and long-term.

As a Task Force, we recognize that this will not be easy – especially in a city where even the simplest of initiatives often face many unexpected implementation barriers. But given the importance of ending violence, we are reminded of Mayor Johnson’s words when he formed the Task Force back in late August, “[In Dallas], when we are faced with a problem, we come together as a city, and we solve it.”

# **The Mayor's Task Force on Safe Communities**

Presented to Mayor Johnson on December 31, 2019