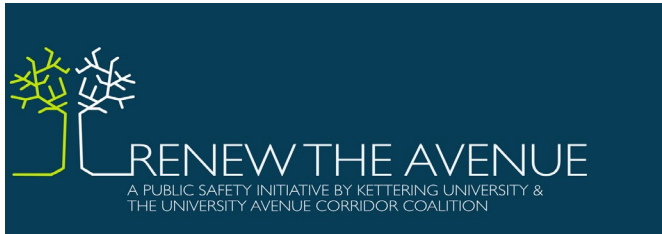


Safety in Middle Neighborhoods: A Placemaking Approach with Measurable Impact

University Avenue Corridor Coalition's (UACC) *Renew the Avenue* Project
Flint, MI



University Avenue Corridor Coalition's (UACC) placemaking crime prevention strategy began when a group of neighborhood residents and program staff attended a CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) training. This provided an opportunity for individuals to connect and discuss issues and solutions related to crime and safety in the area. The group worked together for several years which eventually led to a \$1M Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation grant received by Kettering University in 2014 from the Bureau of Justice Assistance to fund the UACC *Renew the Avenue* project, which had three goals:

1. Reduce property crime, drug related crime and assaults by 20%.
2. Reduce blight that facilitates crime by 40%.
3. Increase community participation.

How Placemaking Strategies Can Help Address Crime

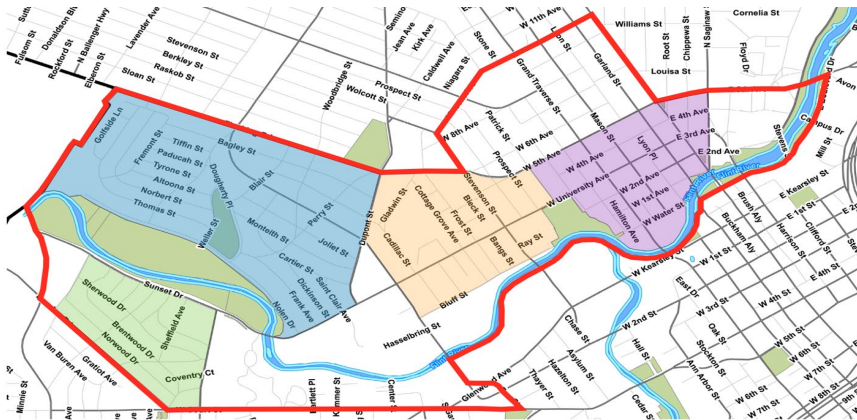
The overarching theory behind placemaking for crime prevention includes the idea that crime tends to be opportunistic: it is easier for crime to take place in spaces that are absent of more positive activities and undefended by resident or law enforcement. By identifying locations with high crime or other unsafe activity – aka "hotspots" -- and examining what makes those places vulnerable to opportunistic crime, residents and law enforcement can develop plans to activate positive activities, and in some cases change the physical design to make those spaces less vulnerable. UACC followed a methodical process involving observations and mapping techniques with neighborhood residents to identify hotspots and design a variety of responsive interventions.

Context: Flint, MI

Flint, Michigan is a city of about 35 square miles located 70 miles northwest of Detroit. At the time of the *Renew the Avenue* project, the City had approximately 100 police officers but only eight or 10 who patrolled, resulting in response challenges as well as a rise in unreported crime. As UACC was looking to address blight and vacancy in its shrinking city, incidents of assault, property crime and drug related crime could not be ignored. Even long-time residents who loved their neighborhood, and wanted to stay, felt forced to move because of high crime. Neighborhood residents in Flint wanted to help reduce crime so the police could do their jobs, so turned to placemaking as a crime prevention strategy.

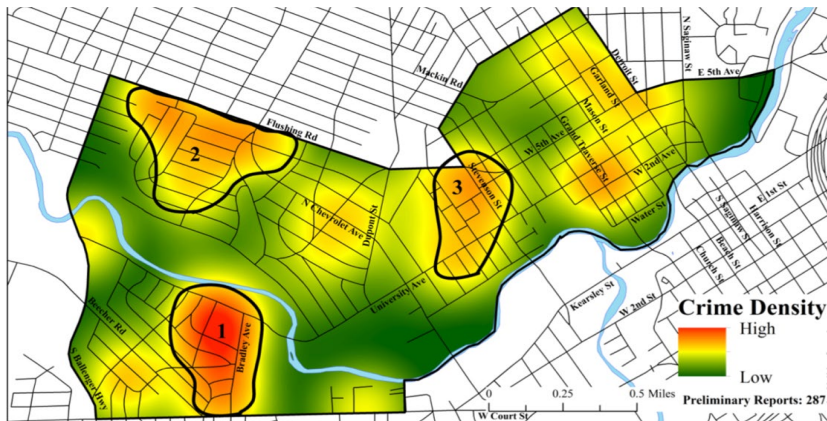
Observing and Mapping Hotspots

The target area for UACC was a group of neighborhoods adjacent to a commercial corridor.



UACC started its placemaking plan by identifying and mapping crime hot spots as well as neighborhood strengths. The group used an observation tool created by the CPTED program to evaluate parks, schools, streets, and more. Staff and resident leaders offered training and pop-up labs to teach residents how to use the observation tool and other assessment strategies, empowering residents to take control and change the story of their neighborhood.

Hotspot Mapping



Strategy Development

A variety of interventions – some managed by residents, some by law enforcement – were brainstormed and ultimately implemented with thoughtful plans. Strategies included:

- Tactical placemaking (see below for more details)
- Resident organizing
- Drug enforcement
- Blight elimination
- Home repair
- Community economic development
- School safety
- Directed patrols
- Technology and using data
- Community engagement
- Public safety partnerships

Tactical Placemaking Activities

Tactical placemaking focuses on solving issues within a specific environment: a problem is identified, followed by a solution involving placemaking. It is a good idea to incorporate projects that provide fast wins and need the fewest resources possible.

River Trail Watchers



Examples of tactical placemaking strategies include:

- Block parties
- Building bike lanes with spray paint and cardboard templates of arrows and bikers
- Story time with community police officers
- Pop up markets
- Food truck Friday
- Holiday lighting contests
- Pocket parks
- Bike patrol popups

Residents implemented some simple activities to occupy spaces that might otherwise attract loitering or criminal activities. These included a small group of knitters getting together regularly in a public space, and pop-up story hours for kids.

Sunset Village Block Party!

Celebrate the summer. Meet your neighbors. Help improve Sunset Village through a placemaking assessment.

Food Truck:
Da Red Wagon
BBQ & Southern Cuisine

Lawn Games | Music | Placemaking
Where: Sunset Village Apartments - Inner Courtyard
Date: July 7 & 21 (Thursdays)
Time: 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Bring: your own lawn chair or picnic blanket

FREE Food for the first 100 people!
+ Chance to win 50% off your rent for August!

Contact: twyatt@kettering.edu | 810-726-9882
www.facebook.com/uacflint

Organized by:

Knitting groups, story hour, and experimental bike lanes are quick tactical placemaking strategies.



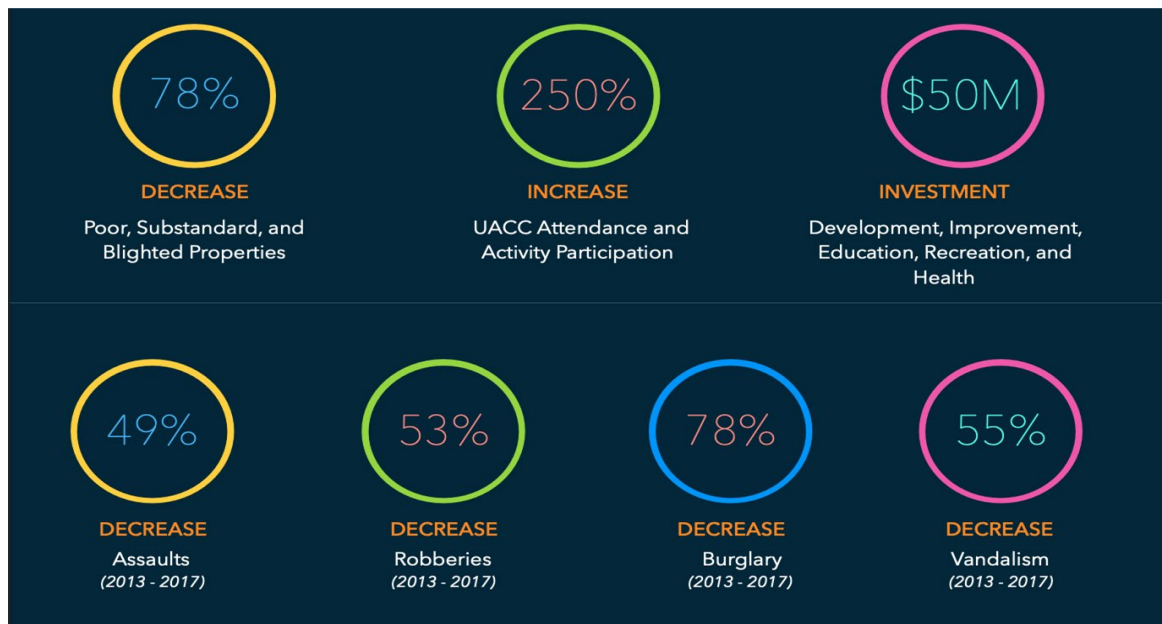
Providing Extra Support

A common placemaking strategy to help residents activate vulnerable spaces is to provide event support. UACC spent about \$3,000 on a **Mobile Event Kit** that includes a battery powered PA system, lawn games, tables, chairs, tailgating tents, and a popcorn machine. Neighborhood groups can borrow it for free and the kit is great for engagement and placemaking. It's very popular and used every weekend during the summer. Event planners also invite other programs and initiatives to join in and set up information tables to increase awareness about local resources that address other community needs.



Results

The project achieved significant measurable results.



Tips for Success

Look for quick wins	Quick wins are actions that energize the community and build partnerships. Look closely at existing spaces and resources, who is already involved and who could be invited, and build upon that.
Create a clear starting point	Know your starting point to resolve community challenges. The pathway may change over time, but it is helpful to start where resources are currently available. Funders follow success and want to be part of the solution, so highlight existing assets and build around those assets.
Focus on crime prevention	Public safety is a pain point, and the cost is high on neighborhood health. Although public safety is not a foundation for revitalization, it must be addressed, or other problems will follow. Try to strike a balance between placemaking and crime prevention. Investment is difficult if crime is an issue and building a plan for crime prevention lays the groundwork for other successes.
Be creative with placemaking	Placemaking can mean physically changing a place or simply changing what happens in that space. When analyzing a place, consider the potential for social interaction, possible uses and activities, the comfort and current image of the area, and access points and links to other community assets. Help people reimagine the space and maximize the benefits it can provide.
Include a community-led process	Identify stakeholders and ask them to help evaluate the challenges, plus come up with ideas and a vision. Then, do a series of short-term experiments. Evaluate each action to measure success, and create permanence when possible, to ensure long-term results.
Ask residents for general input	Ask questions like: how safe do you feel, is there a sense of pride, is the space attractive, what's missing, and what could make it better? Brainstorm together and help establish priorities. Oftentimes solutions include quick and easy fixes like installing benches, basketball hoops, bike racks, lighting, and so on.
Connect spaces to other places	Look for access points and neighborhood links and note if there is anything that discourages people from enjoying the place or what could be done to make people feel differently about it. Make sure strategies don't interrupt other streets or surrounding areas and instead create positive connections.

Questions?

Tom Wyatt, Executive Director

The Neighborhood Engagement Hub: info@nehflint.org

Additional Reading and Resources

Learn how environmental design is helping to prevent crime in Flint, MI

By Allison Grodzinski

https://yvpc.sph.umich.edu/learn-environmental-design-helping-prevent-crime-flint-mi/?fbclid=IwAR1h1zNyjmYOSqAyrskI4MH8i_xLYGelzINzaxBxe29wM_oetUkmbtIqRY

Want to fight crime? Plant some flowers with your neighbor

By Marc A Zimmerman

<https://theconversation.com/want-to-fight-crime-plant-some-flowers-with-your-neighbor-91804>

The US CPTED Association

<https://uscpted.com/>

National Institute of Crime Prevention – CPTED Training

<https://www.cptedtraining.net/>

Renew the Avenue Project Video Series

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNGIgfB_czrsckAtMLLOtV1ZeFuQgyuie