SAFE STREETS ARE HEALTHY STREETS

THE ROLE OF CRIME AND TRAFFIC IN NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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All the families who took the time to participate in this project: Your thoughtfulness and neighborhood expertise are the heart of this report
WHO WE ARE

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES
Transportation Alternatives (T.A.) is New York City’s leading transportation advocacy organization, with a citywide network of tens of thousands of supporters. We advocate for healthy and safe streets that support the use of active transportation modes like walking, biking and transit for all New York City residents.

THE DR. CARL HENRY NACHT HEALTH FELLOWSHIP
The Dr. Carl Henry Nacht Health Fellowship was founded in 2011 by Mary Beth Kelly in honor of her husband Dr. Carl Henry Nacht. Henry used New York City’s public spaces to stay healthy: walking its neighborhoods, running its streets and bicycling to his office, the hospital and to homebound patients. The Fellowship honors Henry’s dedication to improving people’s lives by promoting the city as a place for New Yorkers to engage in healthy activity.

Stephanie Kneeshaw-Price, a 2012 Ph.D. graduate of the University of Washington School of Public Health, was the 2012 Dr. Carl Henry Nacht Health Fellow. Safe Streets are Healthy Streets: The Role of Crime and Traffic in Neighborhood Health is a continuation of the work of the 2011 Nacht Fellow to illuminate the relationships among physical activity, crime safety and traffic safety in Central Brooklyn.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESIDENTS LIVING IN LOWER INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS are more likely to walk than use other modes of transportation, particularly in their own neighborhoods. While those neighborhoods are generally more accommodating to walking than others, they are also more likely to have higher crime rates. Transportation Alternatives’ report, Safe Streets are Healthy Streets: The Role of Crime and Traffic in Neighborhood Health, diagnoses how crime and incivilities may impede physical activity.

Transportation Alternatives compared measures of safety and physical activity in two New York City Police Department (NYPD) precincts in Brooklyn: Brownsville, which has a high crime rate and Cobble Hill, where the crime rate is low. The investigation of both quantitative and qualitative measures of crime, perceptions of neighborhood safety and physical activity in these neighborhoods make this endeavor unique. This is the first community-based project about crime and physical activity to utilize the Photovoice methodology.

In both neighborhoods, traffic safety concerns and lack of community recreation space were found to be shared community concerns. Notably, children from Brownsville who participated in the project engaged in significantly less neighborhood-based physical activity than their Cobble Hill counterparts. This disparity may be influenced by increased perceptions of crime as well as police harassment of youth.

To increase neighborhood physical activity, and overcome the disparity between physical activity levels in high and low crime areas, Transportation Alternatives makes the following recommendations:

- Design street infrastructure to improve pedestrian safety and reduce driver speeding
- Build more centrally-located public recreation centers to improve access to physical activity
- Educate youth about their rights and other NYPD-led youth programs to reduce harassment and improve relations between youth and police officers
- Support community programs and organizations that increase collective efficacy (a measure of community cohesion)
Physical Activity Is Critical To Child Health and Well-Being

Regular physical activity in childhood not only has immediate health benefits, but has benefits that extend into adulthood. Reducing cardiovascular disease risk factors in childhood can diminish the possibility of developing chronic health conditions in adulthood. Being consistently active in childhood can create an established health behavior of regular physical activity that is maintained into adulthood.¹

The role of regular physical activity in childhood is particularly critical as an increasing number of children are classified as overweight or obese and the trend continues to rise.² Approximately 36 percent of 6-11 year-old children in the United States are overweight or obese, with 20 percent considered obese.³ In New York City, obesity rates for children in public school grades kindergarten to eighth grade (ages 5-14) in 2010 and 2011 were higher than the national average, with 21 percent of children being classified as obese.⁴ Regular physical activity is a critical tool in preventing children from becoming overweight and reducing obesity.

Perception of Crime May Affect Physical Activity⁵

Residents living in lower income neighborhoods are more likely to walk than use other modes of transportation, particularly in their own neighborhoods. While those neighborhoods are generally more accommodating to walking than others, they are also more likely to have higher crime rates and other incivilities. Those incivilities may impede residents’ physically activity.

Neighborhood crime is as much a public health issue as a public safety issue. While crime threatens residents’ health directly through violence, health is also indirectly impacted by causing stress, negatively impacting physical activity. Issues of crime and safety are especially relevant to children’s physical activity. Because children are seen as more vulnerable, parental supervision and control precludes them from moving freely through or being within areas perceived as unsafe.
Crime may influence children’s physical activity in their neighborhood in several ways:

**Exposure To Crime Can Lead To Negative Neighborhood Perception**

High rates of crime in a child’s neighborhood may lead to increased exposure to crime, either as a witness or victim, or in knowing someone who has been victimized. Public health research suggests that victims of crime have a stronger negative perception of neighborhood crime and violence than those who have never been victimized and do not know anyone personally who has been victimized. This increased exposure or victimization may heighten parents’ fears of crimes occurring against their children.

**Perception of Unsafe Conditions Limit Neighborhood-Based Physical Activity**

Parents’ perceptions that a neighborhood is unsafe may lead parents to limit children’s time spent in the neighborhood and constrain their physical activity to indoor or non-neighborhood locations. Additionally, parents who worry about children’s safety from crime may prefer to keep a watchful eye on children within the confines of their home, resulting in sedentary behavior (also known as “screen time,” i.e., television and video games) instead of physical activity. Children may be restricted further to their homes if parents do not have the time and resources to supervise their children and therefore must relent to having children stay inside in a known safe place while unsupervised.

**Signs of Crime Heighten Fear**

Indirect exposure to neighborhood crime, such as incivilities and other signs of social or physical disorder, may increase parents’ perceptions of the presence of crime and affect children’s physical activity. This may occur regardless of victimization or directly witnessing any actual crimes committed. Consistent presence of these incivilities in the neighborhood may heighten parents’ fears that crime is “just around the corner,” and that children lack judgment about dangerous situations and are without means to defend themselves. In addition, incivilities may directly pose a risk to the child’s safety (i.e., broken glass and drug paraphernalia can cause injury). To protect their children from both criminal behavior and incivilities, parents may feel that children are safer remaining within the home—potentially resorting to sedentary activities—thus decreasing their physical activity both in the neighborhood and in general.
METHODOLOGY

THIS PROJECT IS UNIQUE IN ITS INVESTIGATION OF BOTH QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE MEASURES OF CRIME, perceptions of neighborhood safety and physical activity. This is also the first known community project about crime and physical activity to utilize Photovoice methodology to inform local change.

Survey Measures of Neighborhood Crime, Safety and Physical Activity
Transportation Alternatives compared quantitative measures in two NYPD precincts in Brooklyn, one with a high rate of crime and the other with a comparatively low crime rate.

Measures of crime were selected from previous health research, including:

- **Incivilities**: Elements and places in a neighborhood thought to be telltale signs of crime, such as graffiti, abandoned buildings and broken glass
- **Perceptions of general crime and disorder**: The degree to which adults feel their neighborhood is unsafe for children because of crime, gangs, drugs and other related issues
- **Fear of stranger danger**: The level of concern adults have for children being taken or hurt by strangers or known “bad” people in the neighborhood
- **Prior neighborhood crime victimization or knowledge of others’ victimization**: Whether or not an adult has either personally been, or knows someone who has been, a victim of crime in their neighborhood

Because of the interest in neighborhood crime and perceptions, physical activity that occurred in the neighborhood was the focus for this project. Physical activity was measured by adult self-report and included questions such as “how often is your child physically active in your neighborhood, street or sidewalk?” And “how many days a week do you ride a bike to get from place to place?” Adults completed a survey about neighborhood perceptions of safety and crime, and collective efficacy—a measure of community cohesion.

T.A. staff conducted on-the-ground audits to assess neighborhood factors within each community, such as incivilities, that may affect residents’ physical activity on their neighborhood streets.

Photovoice: A Community Conversation Through Images
Photovoice is a qualitative public health tool used to help community members tell a more in-depth “story” of their community experiences using photography and group discussion. This participatory process is aimed to facilitate social change. The methodology of Photovoice is derived from the paradigm of community-based participatory
research, which combines knowledge with action. Described by one of its creators, Photovoice is “a process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique.” The process of Photovoice is flexible, with room for creativity and adapting to fit the needs, goals and timelines of those who are involved. However, several key steps are typically followed:

1. **Select a Target Audience:** Identify people and organizations who should hear the findings of the project (i.e., community leaders, policy makers, politicians, program developers).

2. **Recruit Photovoice Participants:** Residents living in the community of interest are given an introduction to Photovoice and provided material and equipment to complete the project. Focus questions, to guide residents’ photography, can be developed by the organization leading the project, residents or collaboration between the two. The focus questions should develop themes meant to reflect community needs.

3. **Take Photos:** Residents document their everyday life experiences, community strengths and community issues through photography.

4. **Community Dialogue:** Residents come together in a group format to discuss the photos and what they represent in the context of their lives and the themes previously developed.

5. **Solutions and Dissemination:** Residents develop potential solutions to issues identified in the community dialogue. Photos and findings are showcased to policy makers, community leaders and other target audiences.

In T.A.’s research, both adult and child participants took pictures of their neighborhood via the Photovoice methodology. The focus questions that guided this process were as follows:

- What is the best part of your neighborhood?
- What is one thing about your neighborhood that you would like to change?
- Is there a place in your neighborhood where neighbors can come together?

Families had the option of attending a community meeting to discuss the photos they took and identifying common themes among them.


**Participant Demographics**

Eleven families in Brooklyn participated in this community project (six in and around Cobble Hill, five from Brownsville). To participate, each family had to have a child aged 6 to 11 years and an adult caretaker who were able to walk.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Participant Demographics</th>
<th>Adult Characteristics</th>
<th>Child Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age, years (standard deviation=s.d.)</td>
<td>42.2 (4.5)</td>
<td>8.6 (1.9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female, number of participants, n (%)</td>
<td>9 (82%)</td>
<td>6 (55%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male, n (%)</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
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<td>5 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic black, n (%)</td>
<td>5 (46%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or multi-racial, n (%)</td>
<td>2 (19%)</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
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</table>

**Community Characteristics**

T.A. SELECTED NEIGHBORHOODS REPRESENTED BY COMMUNITY DISTRICTS (CD) with similar population sizes (each comprises approximately 4.6 percent of the total Brooklyn population). However their relative shares of crime reported by their police precincts are highly overrepresented (73rd Precinct/CD 16: Brownsville, Ocean Hill) and underrepresented (76th Precinct/CD 6: Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Columbia Waterfront, Red Hook) respectively.

Although obesity and diabetes were not directly measured in this project, others have found higher rates of both in neighborhoods like Brownsville than in neighborhoods like Cobble Hill. Health outcomes such as obesity are complex, without a singular solution, but the link between obesity and insufficient physical activity is clear.
SNAPSHOT: 73rd Precinct—Brownsville, Ocean Hill

The 73rd NYPD Police Precinct covers the Brownsville and Ocean Hill neighborhoods of Brooklyn. The 73rd Precinct is located in Brooklyn Community District 16. Crime and gang activity have been a longstanding struggle for those living in these neighborhoods. In a New York Times article on gang activity, a Brownsville resident said, “It’s not safe to bring your kids outside.” Physical activity-related diseases such as obesity and diabetes are also higher within this area, compared to the borough-wide estimates.

Neighborhood needs relevant to this project’s focus on safe and healthy community streets, as outlined in Brooklyn Community Board 16’s Statement of Community District Needs, include:

• Continued funding for community facilities that provide safe spaces for youth, as well as a range of cultural, educational and recreational activities for youth
• Regular maintenance of local parks and playgrounds
• Department of Transportation-conducted surveys flagging unsafe traffic locations with plans for safety improvements, such as traffic lights and more visible pedestrian crossings
• A concerted effort with local authorities (i.e., the NYPD) to decrease gun violence and other public safety issues

Though the 73rd Precinct covers both Ocean Hill and Brownsville, T.A. partnered with a community organization, Brownsville Partnership, to facilitate relationships within the community. As a result, we restricted our project to Brownsville.

Obesity Prevalence

*Prevalence data describe the United Hospital Fund (UHF) districts covering the vicinity of each precinct: Downtown-Heights-Slope UHF (76th Precinct) and Bedford-Stuyvesant-Crown Heights UHF (73rd Precinct)
SNAPSHOT: 76th Precinct—Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Columbia Waterfront, Red Hook

The 76th NYPD Police Precinct covers the Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Columbia Waterfront and Red Hook neighborhoods of Brooklyn. The 76th Precinct is located in Brooklyn Community District 6. Overall, the precinct experiences considerably lower crime rates than estimates for the entirety of Brooklyn. Rates of reported violent and felony crimes, and stop-and-frisk estimates in particular, are also much lower than in the 73rd Precinct. Health concerns related to physical activity are also lower in this area compared to estimates for the entirety of Brooklyn.

Brooklyn Community Board 6 provided district needs. Of those needs, those relevant to this project’s focus on safe and healthy community streets include:

- Traffic calming and other traffic safety measures, particularly to combat truck and other industrial-based travel hazardous to residents
- Expanded youth programs that provide safe locations and resources particularly for teenagers

Violent Crimes Per 1,000 Residents

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precinct</th>
<th>Violent Crimes Per 1,000 Residents</th>
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<tr>
<td>76th Precinct</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>73rd Precinct</td>
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<td>Brooklyn</td>
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COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND SAFETY

THOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME CONDITIONS ARE DIFFERENT, common to both Brownsville and the Cobble Hill area is the need for traffic safety improvements along several neighborhood streets and safe locations for youth programs. The 2012 Nacht Fellowship Project findings, particularly Photovoice conversations with families, affirm that measures to address these needs can increase neighborhood physical activity. Of greater concern in the 73rd Precinct than in the 76th Precinct is the impact of police harassment upon the ability of youth to walk and bike on neighborhood streets.

Based upon prior research about crime and physical activity, the methodology of this project excludes life-threatening “traffic crimes” such as speeding, red light running and failure to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks. The strong emphasis in Photovoice discussions upon the need for improved traffic safety coupled with incidences of harassment of youth while walking and biking indicates that it may be useful for police officers as well as public health researchers to frame crime more broadly to include traffic crime. Under-enforcement of traffic laws and an over prioritization of stop-and-frisk and erroneous sidewalk riding tickets for children under age 13 reflects a misallocation of police resources that may be hindering neighborhood-based physical activity.

“Just slow it down.”
-Brownsville resident

Recommendation: Infrastructure for Pedestrians
In both neighborhoods, a common theme voiced by adults through Photovoice was identification of specific streets that were unsafe because of speeding drivers and a lack of pedestrian infrastructure. Specifically, adults identified street crossings commonly used by children walking to and from school. Discussions included stories of children and adults hit by drivers at these specific locations.

Speeding is particularly dangerous for children. Not only do higher speed impacts result in more serious injury and a higher likelihood of death, but research shows that young children cannot accurately estimate how fast an approaching driver is moving.¹² This adds to their risk exposure.
Cobble Hill: Hicks & Kane Street

Hicks Street is a service road for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE), with many large truck drivers and other motorists “speeding through.” With families living on both sides of the BQE and children attending Public School 29 on the nearby corner of Kane Street and Henry Street, this intersection is a common crossing for children going to school.

Suggested street infrastructure improvements at this intersection include “children crossing” signage, speed bumps and a flashing yellow caution light. To gather additional evidence, T.A. recommends a small-scale traffic monitoring study be implemented. Schools are a community destination seven-days-a-week, though immediately before and after school would be prime times to evaluate the speed of vehicles traveling down Hicks Street.

“[At Hicks Street and Kane Street] a little boy [was] mowed down... crossing Hicks Street with his parents... cars are flying by...I cringe when [children] get to the corners [of Hicks]...Make sure that [cars] obey the traffic laws...so that kids don’t get hit...they just zoom by, it’s really scary.” - Columbia Waterfront mother
Brownsville: Blake Avenue & Osborn Street

Suggested street infrastructure improvements at this school crossing intersection include “children crossing” signage, speed bumps and a flashing yellow caution light to improve safety. A clearly-defined mid-block crosswalk (i.e., raised speed table with painted crossing) would be another essential addition given the length of the block. Added pedestrian infrastructure would also address the traffic safety issue noted by Brownsville residents of “five block” long streets where “cars going flying through there like a racetrack....There’s like three [unmarked] crossings in that one block.” Breaking up these “super blocks,” often adjacent to public housing, with clearly-identified mid-block crosswalks could reduce driver speed and increase pedestrian safety.

“[At Blake Avenue and Osborn Street] the dangerous part is this is a school crossing...this is [a picture of] our school crossing guard. Two years ago, she got hit by a car trying to help kids cross...they really need a speed bump or yellow light to slow it down...there’s no children crossing sign in the middle of the block.” -Brownsville resident
Communities are becoming more active and engaging in healthy behaviors that contribute to better overall health. One area that we focus on here is accessible public recreation. Recreation centers provide a location for community residents to meet and interact, as well as opportunities for physical activity. Additionally, recreation centers provide alternative opportunities for youth to be involved in positive activities, instead of social disruption (i.e. vandalism, gangs) or sedentary behavior at home (i.e. television, video games). Building new recreation centers takes time and substantial funds. Through Photovoice, residents identified locations that already have some of the infrastructure in place for potential centers, which in turn can help reduce the overall costs.

Families in both neighborhoods listed the activities available to youth at recreation centers and the importance of having spaces like this to provide safe locations for children. One Brownsville mother stated, “The Brownsville Recreation [Center] is the only place I feel I can take my daughter to play. They offer many activities for children her age….I like the activities they have to offer such as computer, skating, karate and baseball.” Recreation centers not only address issues of safety for youth but also provide ample opportunities to be physically active. The Red Hook Recreation Center in the Cobble Hill area also provides a common space for all residents.

“We don’t really have a community center.”
-Columbia Waterfront mother

“My son can’t walk down to the BRC...your clique can’t walk on this side, and your clique can’t walk on that side...I’ll jump into a cab and take my son down there so he can be around positive men.”
-Brownsville mother
One Red Hook father noted, “The pool especially is a great equalizer and on a hot summer day, you will find a cross-section of Red Hook.”

Excellent recreation centers are located on the outskirts of both neighborhoods, but a primary issue is the distance to get to these centers. A Brownsville mother stated that the Brownsville Recreation Center “is far….I’m glad it’s there, but we need something close.” Cobble Hill-area residents looked to local parks to serve as a gathering space, but according to one, “There isn’t really any public space where you can go when it’s cold or raining.”

“There is an old furniture store SOKOL Brothers on Columbia Street that is a huge space. That would be a great spot for a community center with an indoor play space for kids….And one other idea, would be some of the commercial space in the 1 Brooklyn Bridge Park building – the entire ground floor is vacant.”

-Columbia Waterfront mother

Frequency of Children’s Physical Activity on Their Local Streets and Sidewalks
Even with the positive presence of the Brownsville Recreation Center (BRC), another barrier to accessing it is gang “turf” conflicts. Not only does this illustrate the fact that some residents may not use the recreation center because they want to avoid possible gang harassment, but also that walking in the neighborhood may be discouraged as a result (i.e., taking auto/public transportation vs. walking to the center).

**Recommendation: Reduced Police Harassment (Brownsville-specific)**

Crime issues were noted in both neighborhoods but were brought up more often in Brownsville. From the surveys, Brownsville residents had a significantly higher perception of general crime and disorder (p=0.0001) and fear of stranger danger (p<0.0001) compared to residents in the Cobble Hill area. Adults in Brownsville were also more likely than Cobble Hill-area residents to know someone or personally have been a victim of crime in their neighborhood.

Though we could not find statistically significant differences between any of the crime measures and neighborhood physical activity, we did find that children living in Brownsville played in their neighborhood significantly less often than children living in the Cobble Hill area (p=0.03).

The role of police in the neighborhood is relevant to the perceptions of high crime and low children’s physical activity in Brownsville. A theme that emerged during the Photovoice discussion was that while police presence is important in keeping streets safe, some residents shared that police can also be barriers to children’s physical activity.

“It was Brownsville Center when it was open. It was a place where kids and adults can enjoy themselves. A lot of activities were in the center but it closed some years back. That was the best part of my neighborhood.”

-Brownsville mother
In one of the community discussions, the NYC Traffic Rule allowing children under the age of 13 to ride their bike on the sidewalk was quickly dismissed by a mother, stating: “I’ve seen cops give kids tickets for riding a bike [on the sidewalk]...y’all know most of these children don’t have IDs [to verify they are 12 or younger]...where [are] they going to ride?” Adults highlighted that when children were given tickets such as these, a challenge they encountered was trying to take time off work to fight the erroneous tickets.

Residents also noted that police officers sometimes approached children in a disrespectful way. “Most officers that are out are rookies and most don’t know how to approach these kids....when they approach a lot of these kids [officers say], ‘What are you doing?’ What, we’re not allowed to walk now, are you serious?...A lot of kids don’t trust these cops.”

From these residents’ insight using Photovoice, it became apparent that there is a fine balance between making streets safer with police presence and feeling free to walk or bike in their neighborhood without undue police questioning. Even with one Brownsville resident’s suggestion to “have [police] sit down in the room with kids and hear their feedback,” another responded that “most of the kids probably won’t come...they [will] become a target [of police harassment].”

To address unpleasant encounters between children and police, Brownsville residents recommended “know your rights” palm cards as one solution to this issue. These cards can easily be carried by children to inform them of their rights should they be stopped by a police officer. Palm cards like these are free and accessible from

“Crime, it’s just too much”
-Brownsville mother
organizations like the New York Civil Liberties Union. Another potential solution is a partnership between community organizations and local NYPD precincts for activities to build trust between children and officers. For example, Play Streets and other car-free events with a local police presence, NYPD-led bike rides and bike safety rodeos, NYPD-led exercise programs and Police Athletic League programs would achieve that goal.

Finally, free one-day workshops hosted by the New York Police Department could foster a dialogue between Brownsville residents, children and the NYPD. Relevant topics for these workshops would include child safety, child identification, and rights and responsibilities when interacting with the police.

**Recommendation: Increased Collective Efficacy**

Collective efficacy is the degree to which neighbors share similar values and informally control their neighborhood’s public space. Having a higher degree of collective efficacy implies greater cohesion within neighborhoods. More collective efficacy has been linked to lower rates of crime and higher rates of children’s physical activity. Community programs and organizations that strengthen local ties can increase collective efficacy.

Adults in the Cobble Hill area reported significantly higher average collective efficacy than adults in Brownsville (statistical significance: \( p = 0.006 \)). With all crime measures put into a statistical regression model, we found that higher levels of collective efficacy were significantly related to a greater number of children’s weekly walking trips to school (\( p=0.02 \)). Most children (82 percent) reported walking to and from school every day of the school week, with the remaining children walking home from school every day but taking other means of transportation to school on some or all of the days.

In Brownsville, adults noted concerns of stranger danger, particularly during hours when children were walking to and from school. One of the Brownsville Partnership’s programs includes a walking school bus, led by neighborhood leaders seen as “safe adults.” When the walking school bus was brought up in one of the community discussions, one mother responded: “That would be good.” Having “safe” neighborhood residents volunteer their time to programs such as walking school buses is a keen example of collective efficacy applied. This supports the findings above between collective efficacy and children’s
weekly walking trips to school. These programs are possible solutions to increase walking trips to school. Barriers to using programs like this can include a lack of adult volunteer leaders and community members without knowledge of the resource.

Another applied example of collective efficacy is neighborhood organizations like Striving to Build a Better Brownsville. Created by two long-term neighborhood residents, this organization has several positive community projects in place. Described by one of its founders, “We used to just call the kids ‘Saturday Kids’...I’d collect 23 kids and take them down to the Brownsville Recreation Center...

this is [a picture of] community clean-up day...at least once a month, we’re just going to clean the parks for the kids...make sure the kids have a safe and clean place to play.”

Through Photovoice, many of the children and some of the adults in both neighborhoods mentioned litter and other factors that made their neighborhoods dirty or smelly, which impeded the enjoyment of being in their neighborhoods. An 11-year-old in the Cobble Hill area noted that along his walk to school every day, he passes the Gowanus Canal and that “you cannot walk by there without it stinking like crazy.” Likewise, two eight-year-old children living in Brownsville said that their local playgrounds are places “where we play and feel safe” but that they needed to clean “the park because it’s dirty....I like it clean so kids can play.”

In our neighborhood assessment, we measured several factors, including excessive litter in streets, which may indicate incivilities. Both neighborhoods had relatively low rates of incivilities. Combined, our neighborhood assessment and Photovoice findings indicate that even with a low observation of incivilities, adults and children are aware of them, and that incivilities can negatively impact residents’ neighborhood experience. Improving a neighborhood through park clean-ups can reduce incivilities like trash and broken glass while also providing safe and clean neighborhood spaces for children to be physically active. Neighborhood organizations like Striving to Build a Better Brownsville are true leaders committed to
doing their part to ensure children have positive neighborhood places.

Involving children in neighborhood projects also teaches them the importance of giving back to their community and helping it thrive rather than being part of issues like littering and crime. Such organizations build upon collective efficacy, provide additional positive opportunities for youth instead of social disruption and are a worthwhile investment of people’s time.

Rate of Incivilities

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>73rd</td>
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*Neighborhood assessment on a scale of 0-24, with 24 indicating the highest level of incivilities.*
CONCLUSION

IN NEIGHBORHOODS WITH HIGH AND LOW CRIME RATES, traffic safety concerns and a lack of community recreation space were found to be shared community concerns. The disparity between the neighborhoods in measures of child physical activity may be influenced by increased perceptions of crime, as well as police harassment of youth.

Specific, actionable recommendations to improve two major school crossings were presented based on community residents’ photos and discussion. Through community discussion and statistical analyses, we learned that neighborhood crime continues to be a concern that negatively impacts neighborhoods, Brownsville in particular. Because of the relatively small number of families who participated in our project, we were unable to support a relationship between neighborhood crime and physical activity using statistical analyses. However, using Photovoice methodology, we did generate suggestions for increasing physical activity, specifically in centrally-located recreation centers. Having locations that are safely accessible and affordable for all residents can provide safe havens for youth while also providing physical activity opportunities.

This project displayed the critical insight Photovoice provides in exploring the relationship between crime and physical activity from a neighborhood-level perspective. Photovoice can illuminate local expertise and life experience of neighborhood residents that cannot always be captured by surveys. By incorporating Photovoice, future community projects may have enhanced and more nuanced local-specific recommendations. This in turn can make recommendations more relevant and sustainable in communities, because the recommendations come from residents who are invested in change.
SAFE STREETS AND PUBLIC SPACES ARE PREREQUISITES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY. Many factors influence crime as well as traffic safety, so interrelated solutions at individual, family, neighborhood and city policy levels are warranted. Improving access to safe spaces for physical activity requires action from several leaders and organizations:

**NYC Department of Transportation:** Install safe crosswalks at corners and highly-trafficked mid-blocks, especially along school routes like Kane Street and Hicks Street in Cobble Hill and Osborn Street and Blake Avenue in Brownsville. Prioritize implementation of 20 MPH Slow Zones and Safe Routes to School improvements for more comprehensive solutions to neighborhood traffic safety concerns.

**NYPD:** Increase outreach to communities about programs already available that promote positive interactions between youth and police (i.e., Police Athletic League programs, free workshops). Reconsider policing practices that deter lawful walking and biking among youth.

**Council Members Brad Lander (District 39, includes Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Columbia Waterfront), Sara Gonzalez (District 38, includes Red Hook), Darlene Mealy (District 41, includes Brownsville, Ocean Hill) and Charles Barron (District 42, includes Brownsville):** Support neighborhood projects that promote safety and physical activity for youth. Allocate funding and land use for neighborhood improvements such as affordable and accessible centralized recreation centers and traffic safety enhancements.

**NYC Department of Parks and Recreation:** Provide funding for more recreation facilities and for youth programs that encourage physical activity at little to no cost to families.

**NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** Incorporate measures of objective and perceived crime and traffic safety into physical activity-related needs assessments, research and health education programs.

**Community Organizations:** Continue neighborhood improvement projects that revitalize the community and nurture children’s community service. Get the word out about neighborhood projects in which families can get involved (i.e. walking school buses, park clean-ups).

**Neighborhood Residents:** Get involved in neighborhood clean-ups and attend neighborhood meetings on issues relevant to children’s well-being, including transportation infrastructure and community safety.
## APPENDICES

### Crime Statistics for the 73rd and 76th NYPD Precincts

#### 2011 Brooklyn Precinct Crime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brooklyn Precincts (all)</th>
<th>73rd Precinct</th>
<th>76th Precinct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Reported Crimes</strong></td>
<td>34,124</td>
<td>2144 (6 %)</td>
<td>633 (2 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(percent of all)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Murder (percent of all)</strong></td>
<td>198</td>
<td>26 (13 %)</td>
<td>3 (2 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violent Crimes per 1,000</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Property Crimes per 1,000</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Felony Crimes per 1,000</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stop and Frisks per 1,000</strong></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References: www.nypd.gov; www.studybrooklyn.org

### Population Characteristics for Community Districts 16 and 6

#### 2009 Community District Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brooklyn Characteristics</th>
<th>CD 16</th>
<th>CD 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td>116,197</td>
<td>117,841</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age 0-5</strong></td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age 6-17</strong></td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>22 %</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES

SUGGESTED CITATION

ENDNOTES
5. See References, “Neighborhood socioeconomic status, crime and physical activity” for the extensive literature review that informed this section.
15. See References, “Collective efficacy in the neighborhood” for the extensive literature review that informed this section.
REFERENCES

NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, CRIME AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY


Saelens, B.E., Sallis, J.F., & Frank, L.D. (2003). Environmental correlates of walking and cycling: Findings from the transportation, urban designs, and planning
REFERENCES


COLLECTIVE EFFICACY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
