

Part 6:

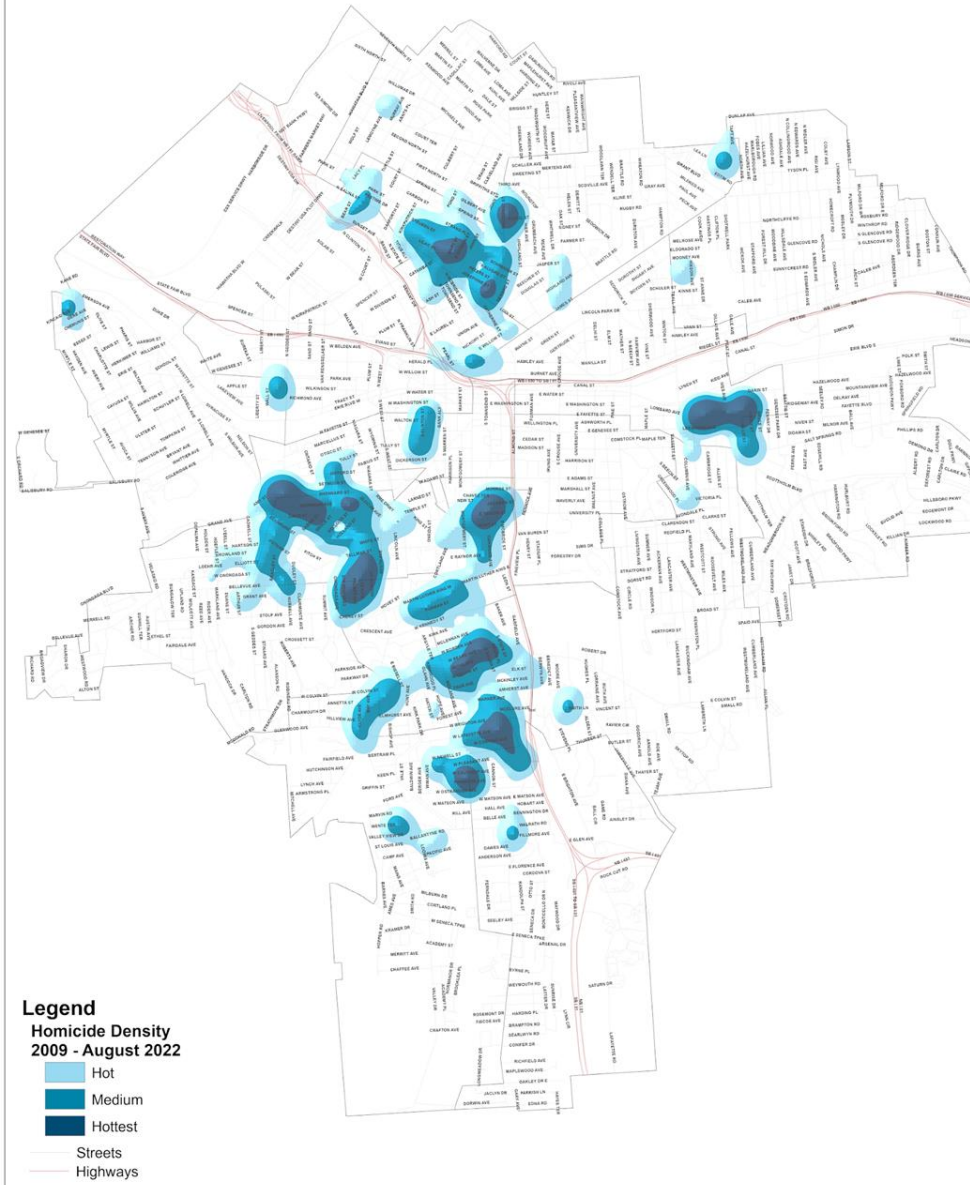
Causes

Our Environmental Impacts

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Cause 3: High-risk features and dynamics in 12 areas of the city

City of Syracuse Homicide Density 2009 - August 2022



Syracuse's homicides are heavily concentrated

- Eleven specific clusters on the north, west, and southwest sides.
- +1 eastern area close to Westmoreland Park.
- These are the areas where violence occurs most frequently.

This concentration also holds for shootings.

A 2017 research paper identified gun violence clusters in these same areas.

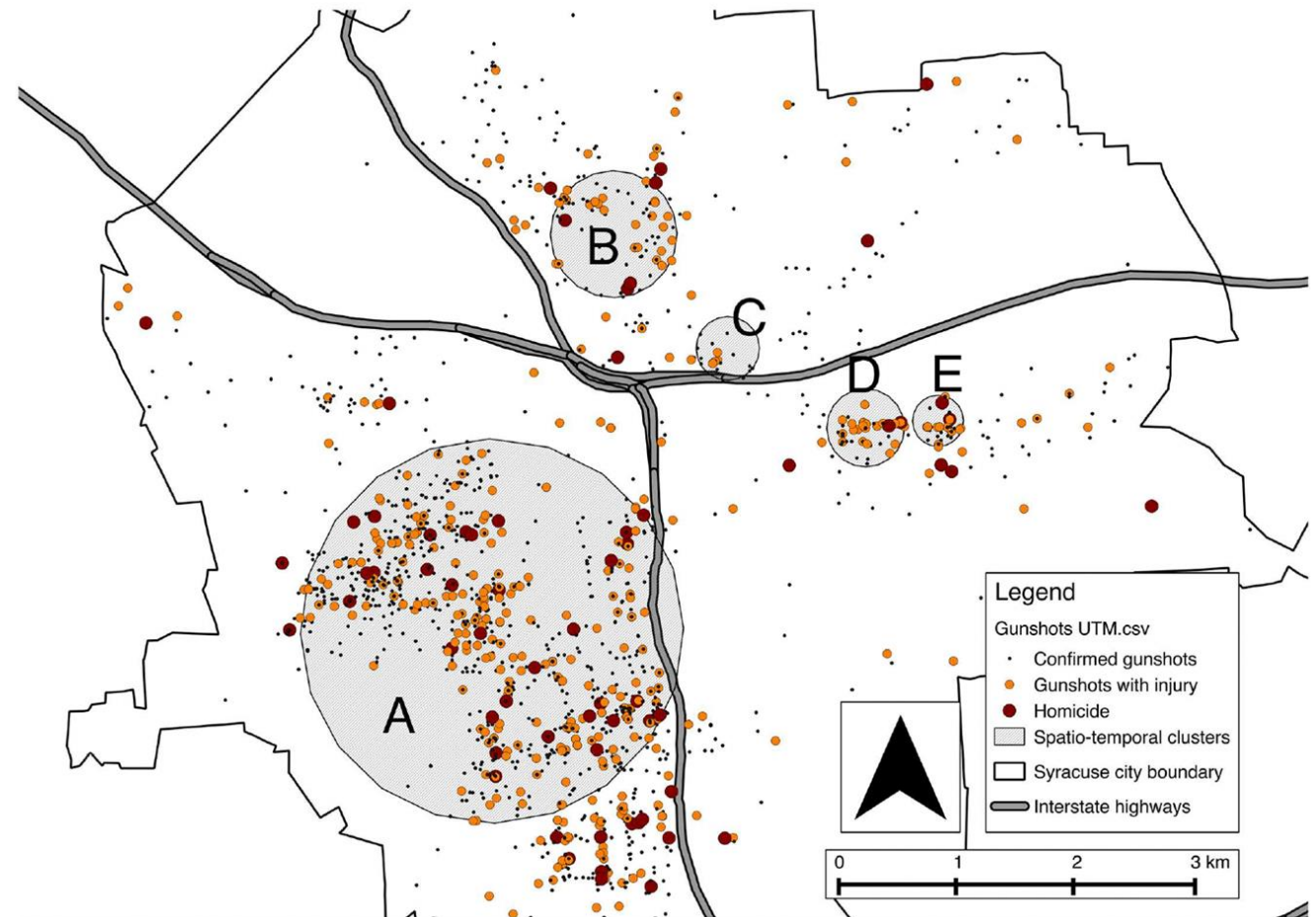
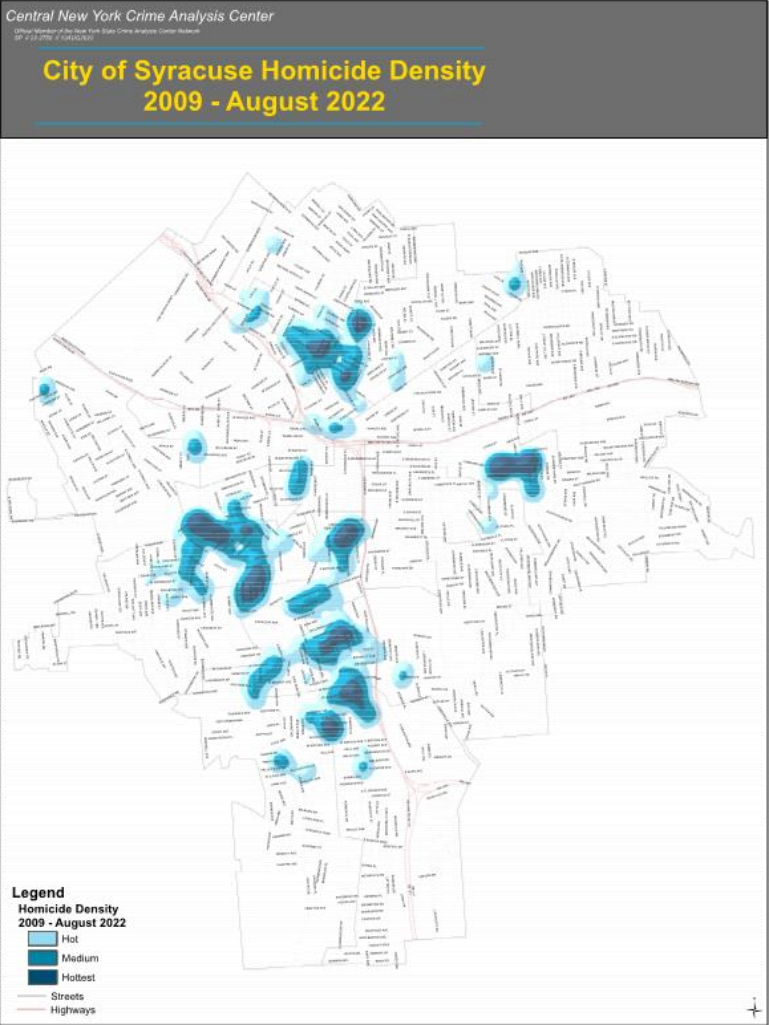
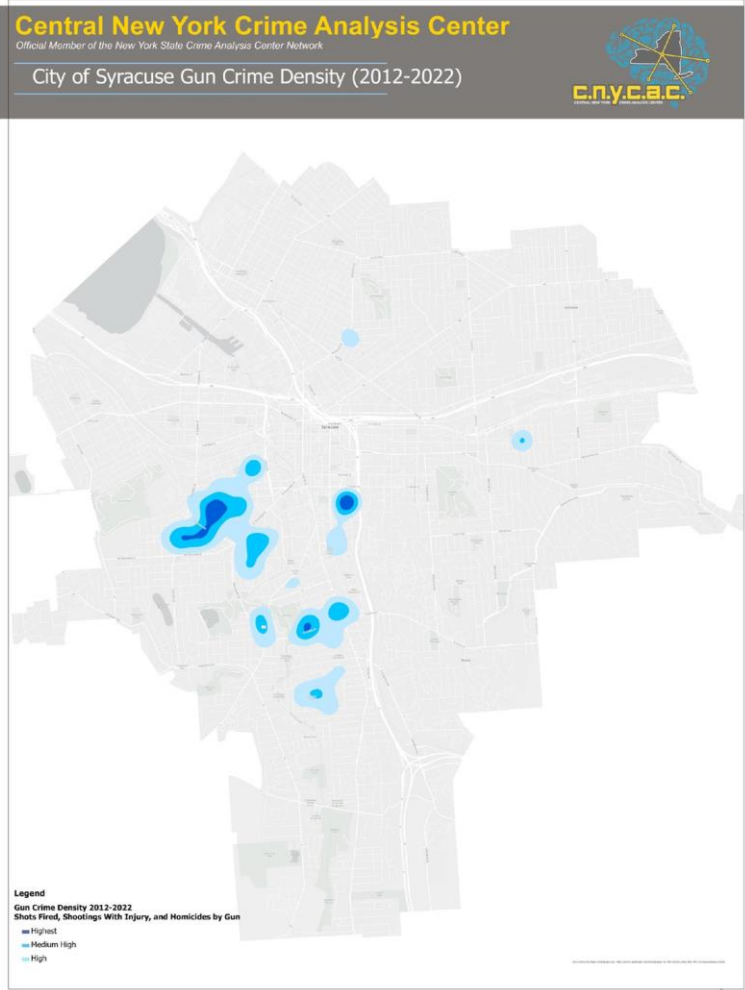


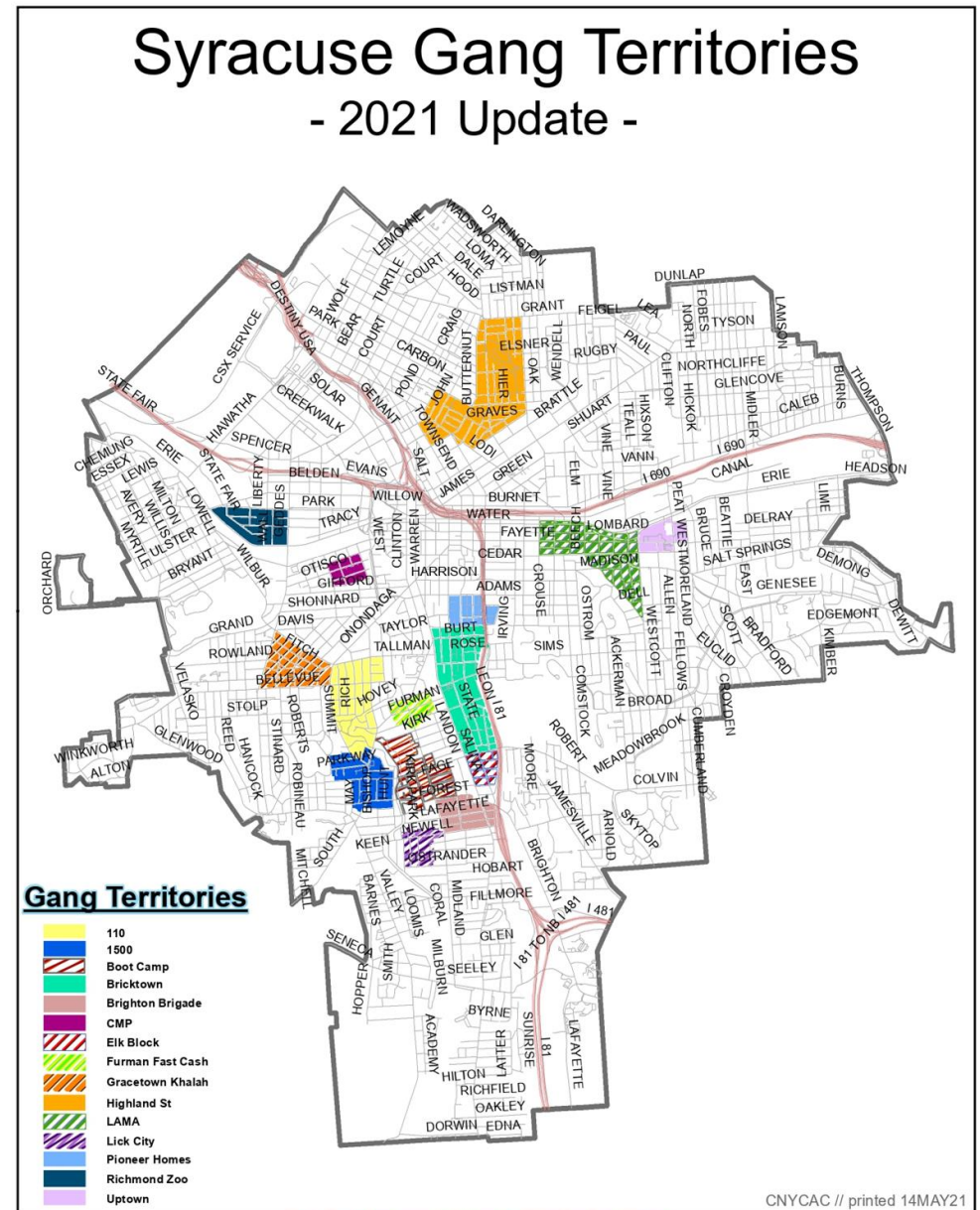
Fig 3. Revealed spatio-temporal clusters of the incidence of gunshots between January 2009 and June 2015. Cluster A was detected from Jan 2009 through July 2012, luster B was detected from Aug 2012 through July 2015, cluster C was detected from Aug 2011 through July 2014, cluster D was detected from January 2009 through July 2012, and cluster E was detected from August 2012 through July 2015.

This concentration also holds for shootings.

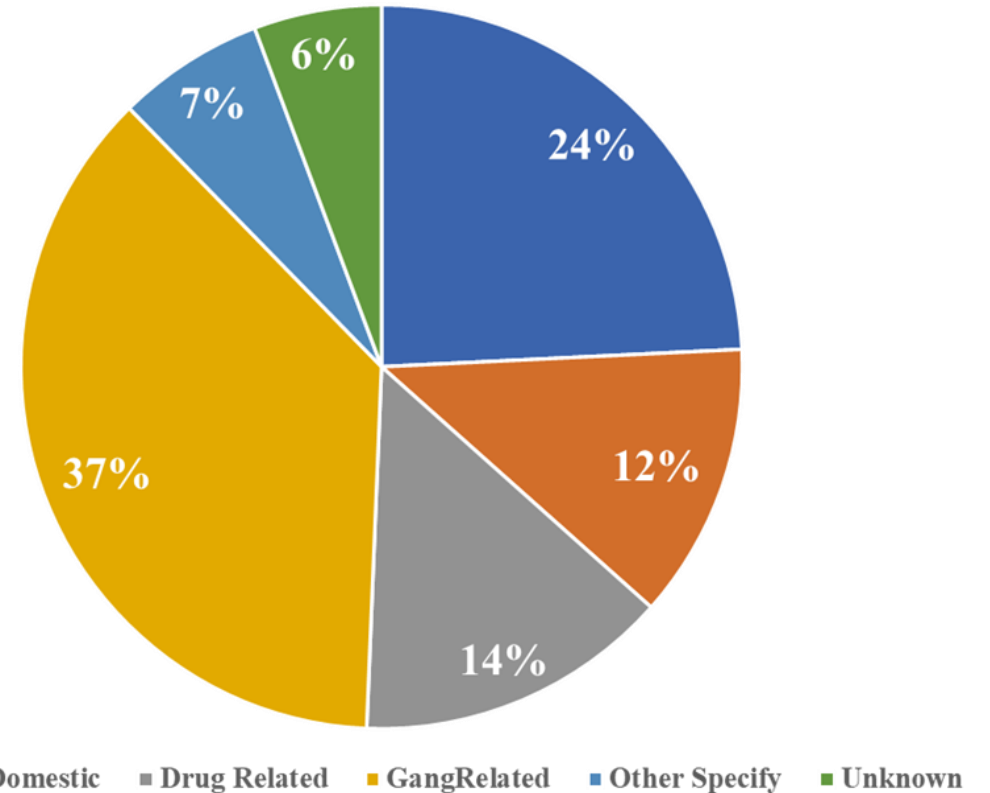


Why?

- These areas have certain conditions that favor crime activity.
- Gang presence.
- Also, these places have socioeconomic factors that create the conditions for this activity to emerge.
- Such as absenteeism, low educational levels, concentrated poverty, and segregation, among others.



Violent crime is also driven by other factors, which are influenced by the particular social dynamics and physical features of these spaces



How can the physical features and social dynamics of places influence crime? In three ways

1

Increase or decrease opportunities to commit crimes.

Felson and Clarke (1998)

Ex: Blighted vs well-kept houses.

Bars without private security or metal detectors.

2

Disorder (when laws and norms are visibly broken) nudges people into breaking other norms or committing crimes.

Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg (2008)

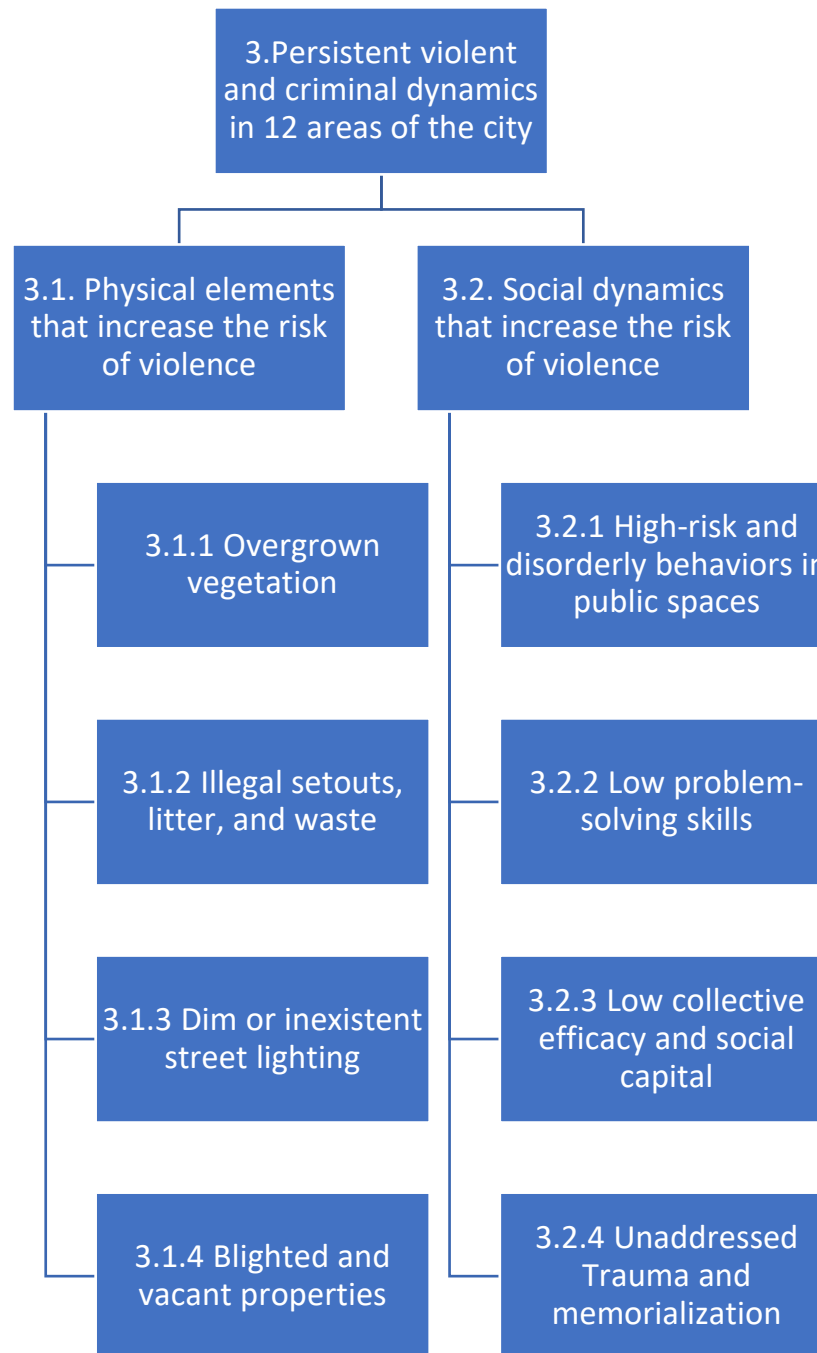
Ex: Illegal setouts in a street full of litter vs a clean street.

3

Close-knit and empowered communities prevent crime activity by exerting social control or pushing authorities into action.

Sampson (2011).

Ex: Burglaries in neighborhoods with high social capital vs isolated communities.



3.1. Physical elements that increase the risk of violence

	Opportunities for crime	Generalized disorder	Hinders social control
Overgrown vegetation	x	x	x
Illegal setouts		x	x
Dim street lighting	x		x
Blighted properties	x	x	x

Overgrown vegetation

- Observed in several violent crime clusters, mostly inside vacant properties and deteriorated houses
- 300 SYRCityline reports from those areas (Jul/2021 and Aug/2022).
- Obstructs the view of neighbors and police officers.
- Signals state of disorder that nudges people into rule-breaking when it's violating city rules.
- Provides the perfect hiding space for weapons, illegal substances, and potential offenders.



Illegal setouts, litter, and waste.

- Observed in most clusters of violent crime in the city.
- +9k SYRCityline reports from those areas (Jul/2021 and Aug/2022).
- Represents 73% of all reports from these areas.
- Doesn't increase opportunities to commit crimes.
- Creates a state of disorder that nudges people into rule-breaking behavior.
- A street full of waste is a hostile environment that discourages positive interactions that enhance social bonds and control.
- Waste scares away communities from their streets and provides possible offenders with risk-free spaces to act.



Dim or inexistent street lighting

- Observed in several clusters of violent crime in the city. Mainly the North side.
- 138 SYRCityline reports from those areas (Jul/2021 and Aug/2022).
- Makes supervision of streets difficult and provides cover for criminal activity.
- People avoid dark streets or alleys, weakening social control.
- A study concluded that street lighting is significantly associated with decreased odds of adolescent homicide. Culyba et al. (2016)
- A meta-analysis of studies determined that improved street lighting significantly reduces crime. Welsh and Farrington (2008)





Blighted and vacant properties

- This feature is quite present in all the city's violent crime clusters.
- Mentioned repeatedly by community leaders in interviews.
- 256 SYRCityline reports from those areas (Jul/2021 and Aug/2022).
- A study concluded that Syracuse's census blocks with more vacant houses had higher levels of gun violence. Larsen et al (2017).
- Maintained vacant lots are significantly associated with decreased odds of adolescent homicide. Culyba et al. (2016)
- A program to restore vacant land was associated with significant reductions in crime. Branas et el. (2018).
- Perfect for: hiding illegal items, carrying out crime activity, and scape routes for would-be offenders.
- Easy targets for vandalism and rule-breaking.
- Intimidating places that neighbors usually avoid, which weakens social activity and control around.

3.2.: Social dynamics that increase the risk of violence

	Opportunities for crime	Generalized Disorder	Hinders Social Control
Disorderly behaviors in public spaces	x	x	x
Complicated problems	x		
Limited collective efficacy and social capital	x		x
Unaddressed Trauma and memorialization	x		x

Risky and disorderly behaviors in public spaces.

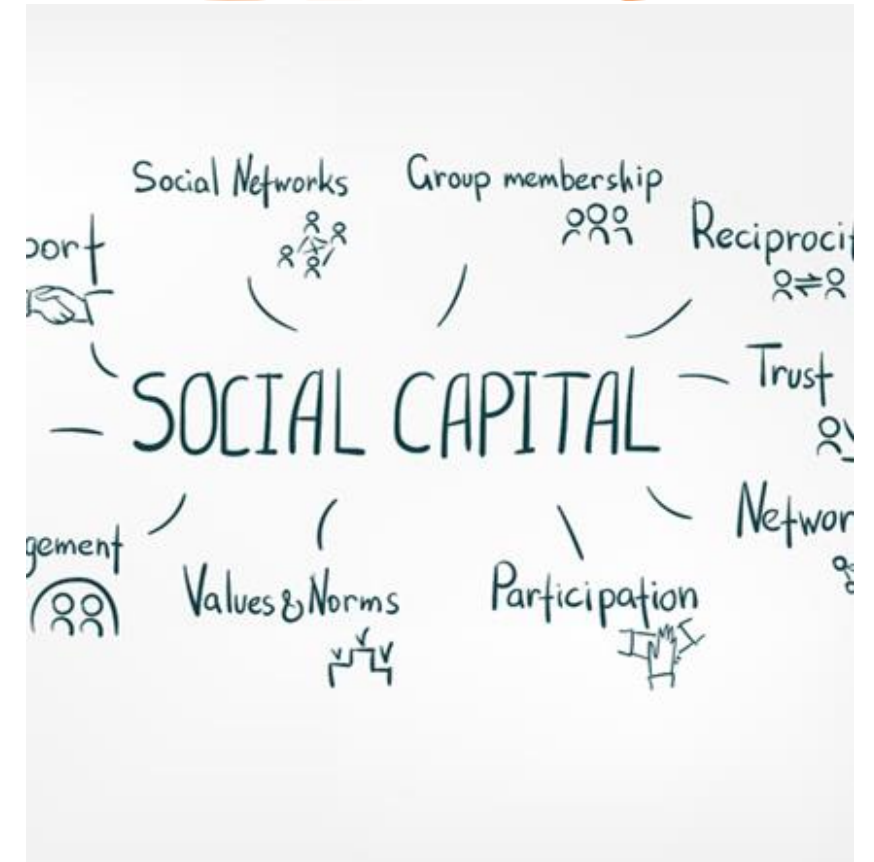
- From blasting music at very high levels to prostitution and open-air drug use.
- Also, the previous physical features.
- Noticed in field observations.
- Repeatedly raised by community leaders and public officials.
- These are not violent, but many are illegal, violate social norms, and create conditions for violent crime.
- Many clusters are “areas of lawlessness” according to interviews.
- These create intimidating environments that scare communities away, weakening social control.



Photo: Syracuse.com

Limited efficacy and social capital

- The safest places are areas where residents know and trust each other and work together to keep their neighborhoods safe.
- Communities in the clusters are afraid of the consequences and disheartened after decades of violence, resulting in neighbors' hesitancy to work together to improve safety.
- Law enforcement: few residents attend their meetings, and most have suspicions that prevent cooperation.
- Outreach officials: it is difficult to do this work.
- Community leaders: people are stressed and afraid





Limited efficacy and social capital: deserted streets

- Field observations also evidenced several areas where street life is almost nonexistent.
- Desertic streets and public spaces with no social interaction or commercial activity.
- Only abandoned properties, vacant lots, and disorder.
- Neighbors have retreated from many of their streets, giving potential offenders plenty of opportunities to act.

Unaddressed Trauma

- Violent crime clusters residents have endured unimaginable trauma.
- Neighbors show signs of PTSD.
- PTSD's symptoms include self-destructive behavior, irritability, angry outbursts, and aggressive behavior.
- Unfortunately, this trauma goes unaddressed. Rubinstein et al (2008) and avoidance of mental health services.

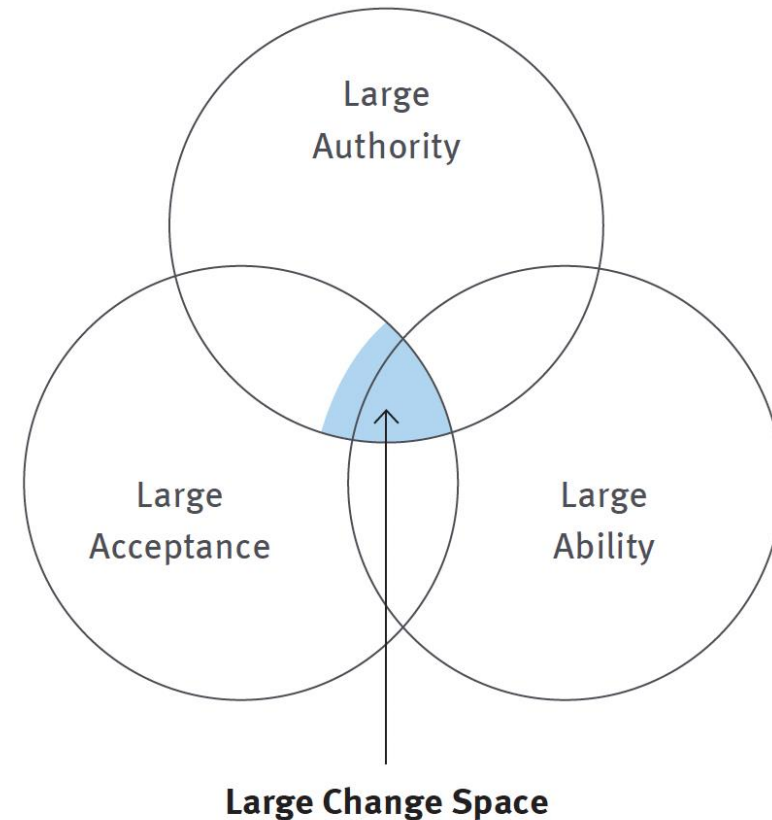




What's next?

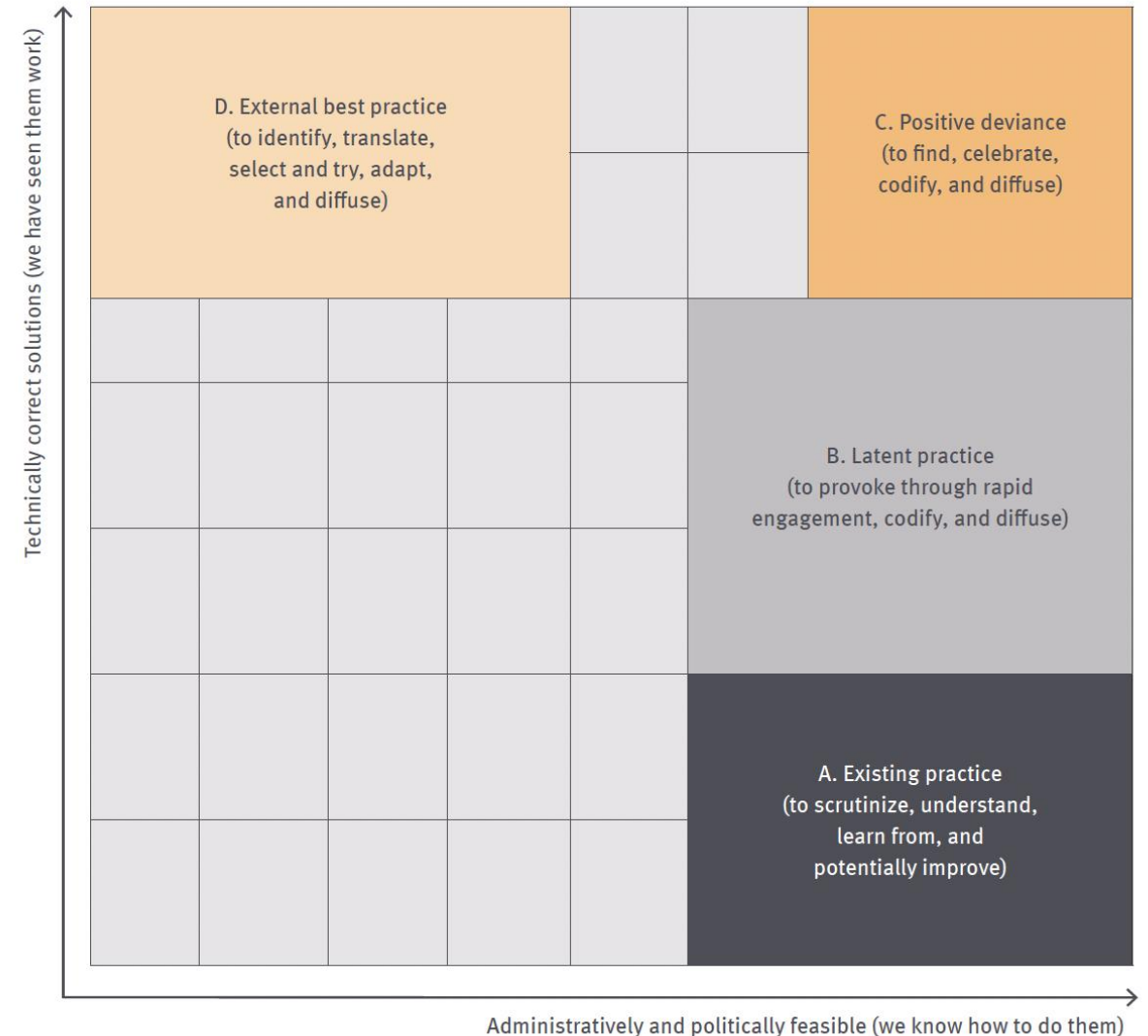
Define where to start

- **Authority:** refers to the support needed for reform or policy change or to build state capability. It could be political, legal, organizational, or personal.
- **Ability:** focuses on the practical side of reform or policy change, and the need for time, money, skills, and the like to even start any kind of intervention.
- **Acceptance:** relates to the extent to which those who will be affected by reform or policy change accept the need for change and the implications of change.



Start Designing the Process to Address the Issue

- **Existing practice:** An opportunity to learn, fill gaps, and empower agents.
- **Latent practice:** The set of potential ideas that are possible in the context but require some focused attention and effort to emerge.
- **Positive deviance:** Positive deviance relates to ideas that are already being acted upon in the context, and that yield positive results, but are not the norm.
- **External best practice:** Look for several good ideas that work elsewhere to fit them into the context.



The work has just begun to
identify methods that
address drivers of violent
