Raze or Repair: The Effects of Neighborhood-Based Community Development
On Crime In Youngstown, Ohio

by

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ABSTRACT

'Raze or Repair' is a housing code term which means: fix or demolish. It is an apt metaphor for many older industrial city neighborhoods that find themselves in peril after decades of decline. It is also an appropriate title for this thesis, one which seeks to create a better understanding of how the field of community development intersects with the field of criminal justice by way of examining how neighborhood planning and development may impact crime and thus help repair such communities. The role of community development corporations (CDCs) such as the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) in Youngstown, Ohio are making significant contributions on this front. To that end, this thesis examined the impact of crime in Youngstown by way of an exploratory case study of the Idora neighborhood in Youngstown. This was done through the lens of Collective Efficacy theory and specifically by looking at five independent programing variables which had been shown to reduce crime in other communities. Crime statistics were analyzed over a 7-year period (2010-2016) in Idora to determine what impact such programing had on the neighborhood. It was shown that total violent as well as property crime did decline over the seven-year time period, however, not at a rate expectedly higher than the rest of the city. Individual violent and property crime rates as well as demographic and housing data were also examined in order to provide deeper context and analysis. Finally, independent programing variables were compared to median crimes rates in two time periods (prior to and during YNDC's work in Idora) and a point scale was generated. The model found that for every point increase in aggregate programing output, a 3.15 decrease in the crime rate could be detected.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

When it comes to understanding the national crime decline in the United States over the past 25 years, most research has focused on such things as increases in police force sizes, mass incarceration or associated environmental, public health and demographic shifts to explain the trend. In the case of Youngstown, Ohio, local efforts have looked at the economy and geographic location (Orto, 2013; Beraduce, 2010). However, the work of neighborhood-based community development organizations and their impact on crime is an area that has demonstrated to be a significant contributing factor and worthy of further examination (Sharkey, Torrats-Espinosa & Takyar, 2017).

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines community development as, "activities (that) build stronger and more resilient communities through an ongoing process of identifying and addressing needs, assets, and priority investments," (HUD.gov). Planning and implementation of this work is sometimes conducted by government agencies, but it is often handled by organizations called Community Development Corporations (CDCs). According to The Democracy Collaborative, CDCs are defined as:

> Nonprofit, community-based organizations focused on revitalizing the areas in which they are located, typically low-income, underserved neighborhoods that have experienced significant disinvestment. While they are most commonly celebrated for developing affordable housing, they are usually involved in a range of initiatives critical to community health such as economic development, sanitation, streetscaping, and neighborhood planning projects, and oftentimes

even provide education and social services to neighborhood residents (Community-Wealth.org).

The origin of these organizations dates back to President Lyndon Johnson's 'War On Poverty" campaign in the 1960s. Specifically, they were created by then Attorney General Robert Kennedy who developed a prototype in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood based on an amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Von Hoffman, 2012).

Since that time, the field has grown significantly and specifically so in recent decades. In fact, as of 2010, there were approximately 4,500 CDCs operating in communities across the nation (Von Hoffman, 2012). In Ohio specifically, CDCs serve approximately 1,000,000 people through programs in affordable housing, food access, community economic development, financial empowerment and community engagement (Ohio CDC Association, 2016).

To that end, this thesis will examine the effects of neighborhood-based community development on crime in Youngstown, Ohio. Youngstown has been selected for this study due to the high-profile nature of its city planning initiative, the *Youngstown 2010 Comprehensive Plan* (herein referred to as *Youngstown 2010*), as well as its relatively new but aggressive focus on neighborhood development by way of the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC).

Criminological theory along with a review of existing literature on this topic will be reviewed by way of five main categories:

- Planning & Design

- Neighborhood Organizing

- Housing (Vacant & Abandoned Property)

- Park & Greenspace Development

- Creative Placemaking

The thesis will then review the history and goals of *Youngstown 2010* (launched in 2005) and the work of YNDC (launched in late 2009). In particular, the Idora neighborhood will be examined as it has been a major focus of YNDC's programing since its inception and thus provides an ideal sample for analysis.

Crime statistics will be reviewed over a 7-year period (2010-2016) to determine what impact such programing has had on the neighborhood. The thesis will conclude with a discussion of the results, possible limitations and recommendations for future research. Part of the discussion will include an examination of the recent Department of Justice Community Based Crime Reduction (CBCR) initiative currently underway in the Cottage Grove neighborhood on the south side of the city. The initiative is a joint effort between YNDC, the Youngstown Police Department and Youngstown State University and is a place-centered, community engagement approach to public safety. This research hopes to compliment the research derived from that initiative as well as the research generated from the national program at-large. Examining the strength of a singular aspect of the approach (neighborhood-based community development in this case) may prove beneficial when attempting to place value on that component's impact or importance.

Summary

Community Development is a broad term to describe a variety of programing that provide physical, economic and social services in distressed areas. This work is typically conducted by CDCs, which have grown in both size and scope over the past 50 years.

Youngstown, Ohio is a city which has made a significant effort to increase its planning and neighborhood-based community development activity since the turn of the 21st century. It began with the creation of the *Youngstown 2010 Citywide Plan* and from that effort was born the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation, a community development corporation that has conducted a great deal of the neighborhood planning and development work throughout the city.

The next section will examine relevant theory and existing literature regarding neighborhood-based community development and its impact on crime. A thorough review of the history and goals of *Youngstown 2010* as well as YNDC and its work in the Idora neighborhood will also be conducted.

Chapter 2 Conceptual Framework & Literature Review

The research question this thesis seeks to answer is whether or not Youngstown's approach to neighborhood-based community development has been effective at reducing crime. The purpose of this chapter will be to provide a review of relevant criminological theory, as well as the existing literature regarding neighborhood development's impact on crime in communities similar to Youngstown. It will also examine Youngstown's current efforts. In doing so, an examination of the history and goals of Youngstown's *2010 Plan* as well as the work of the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation will be provided. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the Idora neighborhood, an area of considerable emphasis regarding YNDC's programing since its inception in late 2009.

Introduction

Legacy cities such as Youngstown, defined as "older industrial cities that have experienced sustained job and population loss over…decades" (Mallach & Brachman, 2013), pose a unique challenge when it comes to revitalization in the United States. Addressing crime in these communities is particularly challenging given such comprehensive distress. However, there are several criminological theories which help provide an understanding of how and why crime develops in such places as well as what approaches have proven effective in dealing with the issue. Four of these theories are described below along with Collective Efficacy theory which, together, provide context to the conceptual model tested in this thesis.

Relevant Theory

Crime Opportunity theory suggests that offenders often choose areas where the likelihood of success is high and risk is low (Hindelang, M., Gottfredson, M. & Garofalo,

J., 1978). Companion theories include Routine Activities (Felson & Cohen, 1979), Rational Choice (Cornish & Clarke, 1986) and Crime Pattern (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984), all of which generally suggest that crime is the result of vulnerable and opportunistic environments; when opportunity is limited, so, too, is the likelihood of criminal activity.

Broken Windows theory suggests that inadequate and untimely responses to lesser crimes (ex. graffiti, litter, blight, social disturbances) can lead to the creation of an environment in which further crime may breed; addressing these issues aggressively in their infancy can prevent more serious crime from developing (Kelling & Coles, 1996). (It should be noted that while Broken Windows is popular theory among certain academic and law enforcement circles and credited for significant reductions in crime, evidence has suggested that such an approach only addresses part of a larger socio-economic condition and that people of color are typically disproportionately targeted by police thereby potentially contributing to other issues [Chauhan, Fera, Welsh, Balazon, & Misshula, 2014]).

Defensible Space theory argues that improving physical spaces can limit opportunities and discourage criminal activity (Newman, 1972). This theory coincided with and helped refine the planning and design concept known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CEPTED) which will be discussed in a following section. Each of the aforementioned theories belong to the overarching field of Environmental Criminology which examines, in part, the dynamics of a given location and the opportunities and motivation it may present in relation to crime (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1991).

Social Disorganization theory examines neighborhood ecological factors such as low levels of educational attainment, concentration of poverty, residential turnover, and deteriorating infrastructure (among others) and suggests that areas with high concentration of these factors are more likely to experience higher rates of crime (Gaines & Miller, 2012). This was further explored by Sampson and Wilson (1995) who argued that structural issues relating to racial and economic inequality has led to de-facto segregation and the concentration of poverty among minority populations in many urban communities. Such severe socioeconomic isolation is perpetuated by the fear, distrust and often relocation (a.k.a. "white flight") exhibited by residents. This cycle ultimately leads to "the breakdown of the conventional institutions and cultural values needed to restrain criminal conduct" (Blum & Jaworski, 2018).

In attempting to understand how successful communities prevent or overcome such cycles, Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (1997) introduced the idea of Collective Efficacy (CE). CE suggests that increased civic participation within communities leads to increased relationship building, communication, trust and support ("social cohesion" or "collectivity") which, over time, leads to safer and overall healthier neighborhoods ("shared expectations for social control" or "efficacy"). This concept was derived from research that examined the dynamics of 8,782 residents in 343 sections of Chicago over a multi-year period with much of the data generated from individual survey work rather than statistical analysis alone thus providing a richer and more intimate assessment.

Sampson (2012), himself, pursued the idea of Collective Efficacy even further in his highly-regarded book, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. In his research, Sampson examined over a decade's worth of

empirical data in Chicago's neighborhoods and concluded that "those (communities) with higher levels of collective efficacy exhibit lower rates of crime…and that it predicts future variations in crime". Sampson placed special emphasis on the role of non-profit organizations in their ability to build collective efficacy, something he refers to as the "organizational imperative."

Working from this theoretical lens, this thesis examines the effects on crime when a neighborhood-based CDC serves as the *driver* of collective efficacy-related efforts through planning, organizing and development strategies. In doing so, five key neighborhood development programing areas shown in Figure 1's Conceptual Model below provide the framework to investigate their impact on crime. Each of these five areas is described along with relevant literature providing their context:
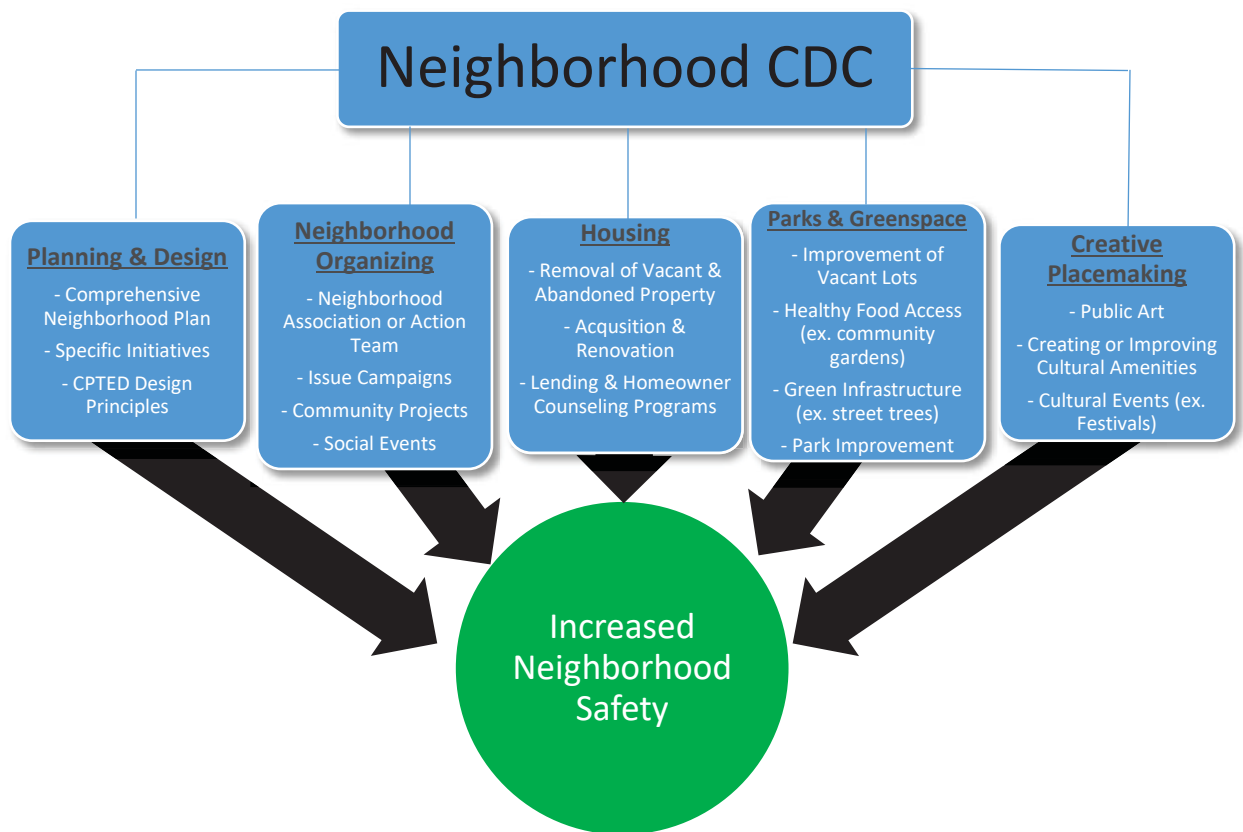

Figure 1. Conceptual model of neighborhood-based community development on safety.

Planning & Design

A popular crime-deterrence strategy among many planning and development groups is an approach known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). As mentioned in the theory section, CPTED is a companion or component of Defensible Space theory and suggests that crime can develop from opportunities presented by a vulnerable physical environment; by making improvements to those vulnerabilities, criminal opportunities can be reduced (Jeffery, 1971). Examples include improving poorly lit areas; installing signage and cameras in strategic locations; increasing property maintenance; and designing public and private spaces in ways which enhance natural surveillance and community awareness (Crowe & Zahm, 1994). CPTED has become widely employed throughout city planning in the United States with both practitioners and academics seeking to investigate and refine its application (Cozens & Love, 2015). However, it should be noted that CPTED is a planning *tactic* for addressing the issue of crime, specifically, and not a replacement for traditional neighborhood planning which is typically much more comprehensive in scope and a common practice among many neighborhood CDCs. However, both involve thoroughly engaging residents to help shape the decision making process as well as carry out and sustain whatever decisions and improvements that are made.

Neighborhood Organizing

Disorder (sometimes referred to as Incivilities) theory suggests that as confidence diminishes in local authority's willingness or ability to address problems as they develop, fear of further crime increases. This, in turn, can lead to avoidance behavior among residents. Examples include looking out only for one's own safety or moving from an

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area altogether. As a result, informal social controls weaken, crime increases as potential offenders feel emboldened, and a self-reinforcing cycle develops leading to the social and physical deterioration of a neighborhood (Skogan, 1990; Rengifo & Bolton, 2012).

Perhaps the most common response to this type of situation is the formation of block or neighborhood watches. Such groups seek to address crime collectively rather than as individuals. These groups have grown significantly since their emergence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time when crime in the U.S. began to rise drastically. For example, the 2000 National Crime Prevention Survey estimated that roughly 41% of the U.S. residential population was covered by such groups at that time.

However, results vary as to whether these groups are effective at reducing crime. A 2002 study prepared for Congress by the National Institute of Justice and the University of Maryland concluded that they were generally not effective. Their finding was based on the fact that many residents in high crime neighborhoods are reluctant to organize due to fear or distrust of their neighbors and that, "middle class areas, in which trust is higher, generally have little crime to begin with, making measurable effects on crime almost impossible to achieve," (Sherman and Eck, 2002). Alternatively, a 2008 U.S. Department of Justice study found that, on average, there was a 16% decrease in crime in organized communities when compared with control areas. The same study noted that, "results of evaluations are mixed and show that some programs work well while others appear to work less well or not at all," (Halloway, Bennet & Farrington, 2013).

While crime is typically the focus of block or neighborhood watches, more dynamic groups seek to improve neighborhood conditions in broader terms. For example,

a 2018 report by the University Avenue Corridor Initiative, a group of residents, businesses and two local colleges in Flint, Michigan, examined the efforts to improve a three-mile stretch of the Carriagetown neighborhood over a 5-year period. The group focused not only crime but also physical and social improvements such as tearing down or fixing up vacant homes, cleaning up vacant lots, improving sidewalks, lighting and public spaces, and building social bonds through inclusive neighborhood events and activities. Over this period of time, assaults decreased 54%, robberies 83%, and burglaries 76% (UACC, 2018).

Researchers studying the initiative refer to the approach as the "busy streets" concept, a community empowerment approach which suggests that safe and healthy neighborhoods develop when "processes and structures (are put in place) for positive social interactions to emerge and develop" through broad, proactive and collective action (Aiyer, Zimmerman, Morrel-Samuels, Reischl, 2015).

Vacant & Abandoned Property

Vacant and abandoned property is a major problem afflicting many older industrial communities. When concentrated, these properties impact crime rates, negatively affect property values, increase public health risks, deteriorate social cohesion, encourage outmigration, and cost local governments significant tax dollars to address the problem (Shilling & De Leon, 2017).

A 2012 study by the University of Pennsylvania found significant association between vacant properties and the risk of aggravated assault. The study compiled data between 2002-2006 among 1,816 Census Block Groups throughout the city of Philadelphia, PA and found that 84% had at least one vacant property, 89% had at least

one aggravated assault, and 64% had at least one or more gun assaults. The risk of aggravated assault increased 18% for every category shift in vacant property (Brandas, Rubin & Guo, 2012).

A 2015 study by researchers at the National Bureau of Economic Research examined the impact of residential foreclosures and vacancies on violent and property crime in Pittsburgh, PA. It found that violent crime rates increase by roughly 19% once a foreclosed home becomes vacant and that the effect increases with the length of vacancy from up to 12-18 months (Cui & Walsh, 2015).

Finally, a 2017 study by Case Western Reserve University examined data of all 113,060 residential properties in the City of Cleveland. Each property was evaluated, focusing on property occupancy or vacancy and property condition. It was then given a letter grade from A through F. The study found that hot spots of vacancy and property deterioration co-occur with hot spots of violent crime at a 60% rate or higher in numerous crime categories. In areas of concentrated vacancy, even properties in good condition coexist with hot spots of criminal activity at the same rates (Case Western Reserve University, 2017).

Parks & Greenspace Development

Residential and commercial structures are not the only issue when it comes to vacant and abandoned property. Vacant and blighted urban land poses a significant public health and safety problem as well (Shilling & De Leon, 2017). The issue of vacancy is prevalent; it has been estimated that approximately 15% of the land is U.S. cities is vacant or abandoned (Pagano & Bowman, 2000).

A 2011 study in Philadelphia that examined vacant lots between 1999 and 2008 showed that improving those lots by way of intentional greening was associated with significant, consistent reductions in gun assaults and vandalism (Branas et al., 2011). This was followed by a similar study in 2018 (also in Philadelphia) which examined 541 randomly selected vacant lots in the city over a 38-month period. Data were analyzed 18 months before and after improvements. The results showed a 29% reduction in gun violence, 22% decrease in burglaries and a 30% reduction in nuisances for areas below the poverty line near treated lots. Additionally, perceptions of crime dropped by 37%, while vandalism dropped by 39%, and safety concerns by 58%, (Branas, South, Kondo, Hohl, Bourgois, Wiebe & McDonald, 2018). Recent research in smaller legacy cities such as Flint (Sadler, Pizarro, Turchan, Gasteyer & McGarrell, 2017) as well as Youngstown (Kondo, Hohl, Han & Branas, 2016) have produced similar findings.

Included in these greening strategies is the repurposing of vacant land for the production of food (e.g. community gardens or urban farms) which can help impact crime by way of increasing productive social activity in previously neglected spaces. This can contribute to greater informal social control which has the ability to lower criminal motivation or opportunity (Blair, 2014). This strategy also positively impacts other issues such as food and income insecurity by increasing access to healthy food and generating supplemental income by way of harvesting and selling items at events such as local farmers markets.

Park improvement may also play a role in helping reduce crime. A 2017 study in Chicago examined the links between a park trail development and crime rates in nearby neighborhoods before and after development of the 2.7 mile Bloomingdale Trail, an

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abandoned rail line. Crime rates were examined for a six month period in 2011, which was before the trail opened, and then compared to crime rates during the same period in 2015, after the trail had opened. Rates of violent, property, and disorderly crime all fell at a faster rate in neighborhoods along the park trail than in similar neighborhoods nearby, with the largest decrease coming in lower-income neighborhoods (Harris, Larson & Ogletree, 2017).

However, other studies have shown that the act of simply improving a park does not necessarily deter crime. Other factors such as location, functionality and intended use must be considered. A 2011 study in Philadelphia examined 249 "neighborhood parks" (defined as less than 10 acres) to determine if there was an association with higher crime levels in adjacent areas. Variables included types of activities, community adoption (eg. cleanups, etc), lighting and other security measures. The results found that the parks were, in fact, related to higher crime levels on the whole. However, when reviewing the details, the authors noted that parks which offered multiple recreational options and organized activities as well as those that resided in mixed-use areas (ie. residential and commercial makeup) had the lowest rates of crime.

Both studies suggest that parks which are located in areas of higher circulation and promote organized activities are less prone to criminal activity. This is a potentially important note for smaller cities such as Youngstown which often must make strategic decisions regarding how best to direct limited dollars.

Creative Placemaking

Creative placemaking has played an increasingly important role when it comes to the reduction of crime in distressed communities. According to the Markusen and Gadwa (2010), creative placemaking is defined as when:

> partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.

A 2016 report by the Urban Institute on behalf of ArtPlace America identified several important variables in which art impacts crime rates, through, for example increased understanding, learning and reflection; promotion of self and community; connecting people to geography; advancement of quality of place; and improvement of the physical environment (Ross, 2016).

Section Summary

The previous review of the general existing literature in the five areas of emphasis provides evidence of how neighborhood-based CDC programing has impacted crime in other legacy cities (depicted graphically in a conceptual model format in Figure 1). It also provides a framework in which to examine Youngstown's efforts.

The Youngstown 2010 Citywide Plan

In 2005, the City of Youngstown was in the midst of finalizing a plan that sought to create a "new vision for the new reality that accepts (Youngstown is) a smaller city" (City of Youngstown, 2005, p. 7). The *Youngstown 2010 Citywide Plan* called for a

radical rethinking on this front. Unlike most city plans which promote growth,

Youngstown 2010 suggested a "right-sizing" which embraced the notion of "controlled"

or "managed" shrinkage given the numerous challenges associated with decades of

economic and population decline (Rhodes & Russo, 2013).

The seeds of *Youngstown 2010* were planted in 1999 when the Harwood Group

issued a report for the C.S. Mott Foundation which concluded that Youngstown "was

ready to break from the days of its industrial past and chart a new vision for the future"

(Harwood, 1999). In 2000, Youngstown State University president Dr. David Sweet

partnered with then Youngstown Mayor George McKelvey to begin the process of

developing a unified plan. This was a unique moment for both YSU and the City as each

had largely operated independent of each other when it came to respective planning

efforts (Finnerty, 2003).

After research was conducted on 49 comparable Metropolitan Statistical Areas,

Chattanooga, Tennessee was chosen as the target city due to its success in dealing with

population decline. City officials traveled to that community to discuss plans with their

local leaders and upon conclusion of that visit, City Council committed $300,000 to

develop a new plan for Youngstown (Akpadock, 2012).

Planning began in 2002 and was led by the City of Youngstown, Youngstown

State University and Urban Strategies Inc. of Toronto, Canada. After three years of

community engagement which included 200 volunteers, numerous neighborhood groups

and businesses, and public feedback from more than 5,000 community members, the final

plan was unveiled to over 1,300 people at Stambaugh Auditorium in January 2005

(Weaver, Bagchi-Sen, Knight, Frazier, 2017). Operating under an overarching theme of

"cleaner, greener, better planned, and organized," it contained four major principles (City of Youngstown, 2005, p. 18):

1. Accepting That Youngstown Is A Smaller City

2. Defining Youngstown's Role In The New Regional Economy

3. Improving Youngstown's Image And Enhancing Quality Of Life

4. A Call To Action

Its implementation would involve a new type of "decline-oriented urban governance" which would rely heavily on community, non-profit and institutional participation in partnership with government for success (Schatz, 2013). Once a final draft was completed, *Youngstown 2010* was adopted by City Council and soon began to generate national and even international media and academic recognition given the fact that it was the first city in the United States to officially adopt the notion of "shrinking smart" - an uncommon practice in field of growth-oriented American city planning (Wiechmann & Pallagast, 2013). Most notably, the plan received the National Planning Excellence Award For Community Outreach by the American Planning Association and was also named to the *New York Times'* annual 'Best Ideas Of The Year' list in 2006 (Rhodes & Russo, 2013). Previously, many other communities resisted such planning concepts either due to denial that growth was no longer possible or simply because of the negative stigma associated with the notion of decline itself (Hall, 2009). Other cited concerns that such an approach was simply a new form of urban renewal, the failed mid-20th century planning policy which targeted mostly low-income neighborhoods and displaced many residents in the process (Hackworth, 2015).

Regardless, *Youngstown 2010* was championed by the civic and political

leadership in Youngstown and paved the way for other communities to embrace the

concept of "smart decline" themselves (Weaver, Bagchi-Sen, Knight, Frazier, 2017). For

example, within eight years after the launch of *Youngstown 2010*, cities such as

Cleveland, Detroit, Flint and Rochester, NY followed suit with similar-themed plans of

their own (Hackworth, 2015).

In 2005, Jay Williams, the City's Community Development Agency director

during the *Youngstown 2010* process, decided to run for mayor using the *Youngstown*

2010 as his platform. He would win, making him the city's first African-American mayor

and, at 34 years of age, the youngest as well. Between his win and the preceding launch

of *2010*, expectations were high in the community as was civic participation (Nelson,

2015; Harrison, 2017; Skolnick, 2005).

During his time as mayor, Jay Williams placed emphasis on aggressive

demolition of vacant property; enacted different policing strategies to try to reduce crime;

attempted local and regional economic development deals; and sought to raise the profile

of the city by discussing *Youngstown 2010* at numerous speaking engagements across the

nation (Wager, 2010; Tweh, 2011). However, the Great Recession of the late 2000s

exasperated an already overwhelming economic situation in the city and concern grew

that simply not enough was being done (Russo & Rhodes, 2013; Posey, 2014). Said

Brookings Senior Fellow and legacy city expert Allan Mallach (2014):

> The city lost 15,000 people between 2000 and 2010, and is still losing people.
>
> Although the city has demolished around 4,000 houses over the past decade—or
>
> more than 10 percent of its inventory—nearly one-third of the ones that are left

are empty. The median sales price for houses in the city was $20,000 in 2012, and

taxes haven't been paid on 30 percent of the properties in the city for two or more

years…Four out of five jobs in the city are filled by people who commute from

out of town, and of the people who still live in the city, one-third are below the

poverty level.

The Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation

Recognizing the need for assistance, The Raymond John Wean Foundation and

the City of Youngstown provided funding for the formation of the Youngstown

Neighborhood Development Corporation in 2009 (Raymond John Wean Foundation,

2013). Working closely with the City and using *Youngstown 2010* as a guide in principle,

YNDC defines its goals and mission as follows:

> to (improve) the quality of life in Youngstown by building and encouraging
>
> investment in neighborhoods of choice for all…with a central purpose to foster
>
> the transformation of vulnerable, undervalued and transitional neighborhoods into
>
> healthy neighborhoods of choice – places where people are willing to invest their
>
> time, energy and resources and where residents can manage their own problems
>
> (YNDC.org).

Since its inception, YNDC has attempted to achieve this through a variety of

programing which is summarized below and is organized similar to the key areas listed

previously for purposes of comparison and consistency. The following information was

obtained from the organization's quarterly and annual reports from 2012-2017:

Planning & Design

Upon its formation in late 2009, YNDC began its planning efforts by creating

individual neighborhood and block plans for a handful of "target" areas throughout the

city. By 2013, the City of Youngstown officially outsourced its neighborhood planning

services to YNDC. Shortly thereafter, YNDC issued a comprehensive Neighborhood

Conditions Report and Revitalization Plan for Youngstown which could be considered a

follow-up to *Youngstown 2010*. Other planning work has included 15 individual

neighborhood "action plans", a comprehensive city parks plan (in partnership with YSU),

micro-plans for two city elementary school areas, participation in an $850,000 U.S.

Department of Justice initiative for the comprehensive revitalization 2.7 square mile, 6

neighborhood area of the south side of the city, two major corridor plans, and a host of

specialty housing and environmental studies and reports. These plans have incorporated

numerous examples of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles and

has engaged thousands of residents, officials and stakeholders throughout the respective

processes.

Neighborhood Organizing

Neighborhood organizing has been a companion piece to YNDC's planning

efforts since its inception. Early efforts involved working with existing neighborhood or

block groups. In time, YNDC would eventually create neighborhood "action teams"

which focus primarily on housing and vacant land issues, but also other quality of life

matters such as infrastructure repair and maintenance, crime and safety concerns and

community projects, events and activities.

By 2017, there were 15 action teams whose collective work generated over 1,000

properties cleaned, secured or improved; 710 demolitions; 369 vacant lots improved; 106

street segments improved; 416 trees planted; 10 neighborhood identification signs and 5 public art projects installed. Over $2 million in grant funding was raised for this work. Building on this success, YNDC organized a citywide action team consisting of 47 residents whose charge is to identify common issues which transcend individual neighborhoods.

YNDC also organizes monthly volunteer workdays which gives the public opportunities to participate in neighborhood improvement projects. Since 2012, there have been over 145 such events which has involved over 6,500 participants.

This type of approach is consistent with collective efficacy theory which emphasizes collective action in broad terms to achieve a more holistic quality of life in urban neighborhoods, to include crime reduction.

Housing: Vacant & Abandoned Property

Housing is typically the cornerstone of most neighborhood CDC work and YNDC is no exception. While blight eradication (ie. demolition) has been a central focus in Youngstown for quite some time (over 4,000 since 2003), YNDC has helped guide that process but has also focused on other important aspects of the problem such as acquisition and rehabilitation of vacant homes (86) while also cleaning and securing hundreds more through its AmeriCorps and workday programs. They have also issued hundreds of code violation letters, completed full (51) and limited (218) rehabs for current property owners; and have created their own mortgage financing (33) and education/counseling (813) programs for homebuyers. The organization also acquires, fully rehabs and sells its own homes (over 100 as of 2017) in partnership with the

Mahoning County Land Bank. Through this work, YNDC has created nearly 500 jobs while also creating its own in-house construction and property management team.

A 2018 city vacancy survey conducted by YNDC and YSU showed a 31% decrease in the vacant property since 2016 and a nearly 50% decrease since 2010. This is notable given the fact that in 2010, the city possessed vacancy rate of 44.8 vacant structures per 1,000 residents which was 20 times the national average at that time (MVOC, 2010).

Park & Greenspace Development

Like their work with vacant and abandoned structures, YNDC has placed heavy emphasis on this issue as well. In 2010, there were 23,831 vacant parcels in Youngstown. This was the equivalent of 5,642 acres or nearly a third of the city's land, yielding a vacancy rate of more than twice the national average (MVOC, 2010).

That same year, YNDC launched its "Lots Of Green" program which provides basic vacant lot cleanups as well as improvements such as landscaping, side yard expansions, community gardens, tree plantings, storm water management infrastructure and pocket parks. Beginning in 2016, they introduced a Youth Greening Grant which provides funding for up to 25 creative vacant lot projects per year. This has resulted in over 400 lots strategically improved since the program's launch. YNDC has also provided over 10,000 grass cuts per year on all vacant parcels in the city.

A 25-month study conducted by the U.S. Forrest Service examined YNDC's collective effort on this front and found that stabilized and improved lots had lower rates of property and violent crime (although different treatments yielded different results) and

that the crime was not simply displaced to nearby areas (Kondo, Hohl, Han & Branas, 2016).

Some of this vacant land has been used to increase public health by way of urban agriculture. YNDC has created over a dozen community gardens, a 2.5 acre urban farm, a soil remediation test site, a seasonal farmers market, market gardening and green jobs training programs and free farming and cooking classes.

Finally, YNDC has assisted with park development efforts, having helped with the planning and fundraising for the Glenwood Avenue Community Park in the Idora neighborhood as well as several hundred thousand dollars in improvements to four other city parks located in areas which demonstrated need based on community input.

Creative Placemaking:

YNDC began incorporating public art by way of mural projects not long after its inception. The organization has installed numerous murals along Glenwood Avenue to include the area around the Youngstown Playhouse, the longest continuingly operating community theater in the nation and an institution in which YNDC has partnered with for several improvement projects, public meetings and events.

YNDC has also organized multiple "Better Block" events throughout the city. The events are temporary demonstrations of potential uses of a vacant or underutilized neighborhood blocks (i.e. pop-up shops, painting of bike lanes, parklets, recreational and artistic activities, ect.) and have the feel of a block party. These events connect residents, officials, entrepreneurs and community organizations socially while also highlighting opportunities for reinvestment.

The Idora Neighborhood

While the output of YNDC is indisputable, the research question this thesis seeks to answer is whether such efforts have had an impact on crime reduction. To evaluate this, we will examine one neighborhood in particular – Idora - which has been a focus of the organization's programing since its inception.
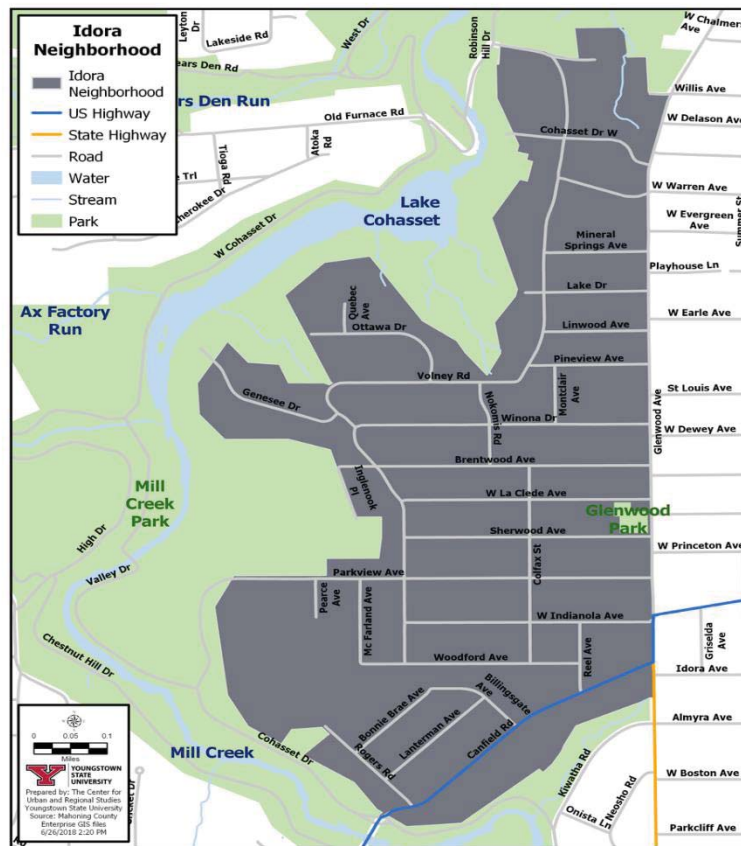
Figure 2: Map of the Idora neighborhood In Youngstown, Ohio (Source: YSU Center for Urban & Regional Studies)

The Idora neighborhood is located on the south side of the city and is home to approximately 1,600 residents. Its namesake is derived from a former amusement park which was once located in the neighborhood and still possesses strong nostalgia among area residents. It is roughly bordered by the region's large metropolitan park system (Mill Creek) to the north, south and west, and contiguous residential neighborhoods to the east.

The neighborhood also possesses a major commercial corridor (Glenwood Avenue) which has been the focus of its own exclusive planning and development strategy. The neighborhood's housing stock is mixed, consisting of large, stately homes near the park on the western border and predominately single-family, lower-to-middle class homes throughout the remainder of the residential area.

Between 1970-2000, the neighborhood lost 23% of its population with racial makeup nearly reversing itself over that same period of time - 84% white in 1970 to 79% African American in 2000 (U.S. Census, 2000), a classic example of "white flight" explained in numerous sub-theories of social disorganization. Between 1990-2010 alone, the neighborhood lost 37% of its population which translated to a vacant housing rate of 19% (YNDC, 2014, p. 205-06).

In 2007, work began on a new plan for the neighborhood. The *Idora Neighborhood: Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan* was completed in 2008 by the City of Youngstown and the The Ohio State University in consultation with the residents and stakeholders of the neighborhood. The plan was an objective of *Youngstown 2010* which set a goal of having every neighborhood in the city receive its own individualized plan. The process was led by current YNDC executive director Ian Benison who was then a graduate student at Ohio State (Rhodes, 2017). As the only neighborhood in the city with a comprehensive neighborhood plan, Idora was chosen to serve as the model neighborhood to test the impact of a collaborative, community-driven neighborhood revitalization strategy which included improving public safety (YNDC, 2013).

Prior to the start of planning, more than a quarter of the combined structures and land in Idora was vacant, it possessed a higher rate of poverty than the city average, and

the median home value was nearly 20% lower that the citywide median of $40,900 (Bertron & Hamilton, 2016). Between 2002-2006, there was an average of over 40 burglaries per year, nearly 200 instances of domestic violence (25% involving a weapon), 303 instances of serious crimes against property and 1,443 against people which includes a tripling of reports of gunfire between 2005-2006 (City of Youngstown, 2008). According to the Idora Neighborhood Plan, crime was listed as *the* top concern among residents.

YNDC was launched in late 2009 and began its programing in Idora in 2010. According to data provided by the organization, as of December 2016, YNDC had demolished 137 structures, rehabilitated 37 vacant homes, repaired 93 additional homes for low-income homeowners, provided loans to 19 homeowners, repurposed over 220 vacant lots, created a 2.7 acre urban farm, organized an annual farmers market, partnered with the City to develop and new park on Glenwood Avenue, and installed 6 neighborhood signs and 8 pieces of public art. The organization has also worked closely with the Idora Neighborhood Association. This partnership has involved organizing monthly neighborhood meetings, events, projects and a neighborhood festival; shutting down 3 problem corner stores; demolishing 5 known drug houses and dismantling a 30-member neighborhood gang; establishing a 4H club for neighborhood youth; and working with community police officers to address priority quality of life issues (YNDC, 2013).

Summary

The first part of this chapter established a theoretical framework for this thesis and was followed by a literature review of five key areas of neighborhood development -

planning, neighborhood organizing, housing, greenspace development, and creative placemaking – and their effect on crime reduction. Important due to the partnerships it created, residents it engaged and new vision it provided, the *Youngstown 2010 Citywide Comprehensive Plan* established a framework for change but fell short when it came to its intended execution. However, it did lead to the creation the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation which, in many ways, advanced a number of *Youngstown 2010*'s overarching goals by way of its neighborhood planning and development programing. Since its launch in late 2009, the organization's central focus has been Idora, a south side neighborhood which experienced significant issues with population loss, poverty, vacant property and crime beginning as early as the 1970s. Using a comprehensive neighborhood plan that was completed in 2008, YNDC has made significant gains in addressing a number of issues facing the neighborhood.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology in this thesis. In doing so, it will cover the hypothesis, research design, sample, data, measures and proposed analysis. The overall goal of the methodology chapter is to make the reader aware of how the data are to be used to address the conceptual model presented in this chapter as well as explain how they were collected, what they entail, and how they will be analyzed.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter covers how the evidence to test the research question hypotheses were gathered. In doing so, it reiterates what the central question this thesis addresses, lists the hypotheses, and explains the research design, sample, measures, and plan for the analysis.

Research Question & Hypothesis

The research question this thesis investigates is: What is the effectiveness of Youngstown's approach to neighborhood-based community development relative to crime? The three hypotheses to be tested are:

H1: Neighborhood-based community development will reduce total violent crime in the Idora neighborhood by at least 20% over the 7-year time frame investigated.

H2: Neighborhood-based community development will reduce total property crime in the Idora neighborhood by at least 20% over the 7-year time frame investigated.

H3: Crime in Idora will be reduced more than the remainder of the city over the 7-year time frame investigated.

In order to examine this question and test its respective hypotheses, data were gathered from several sources. The following is a description of the process undertaken to obtain, organize, and analyze that data.

Design

The research design for this thesis was content analysis. It was chosen for at least three reasons. The first was potential. The appropriate data exist, however, to date it has not been analyzed. The second was resource limitations. Content analysis is efficient and the data gathered was publicly available and accessible to the researcher in the capacity as a practitioner in the field of community development in Youngstown. The third reason

is related to the second in that content analysis offers high reliability and credibility with minimal cost (Maxfield & Babbie, 2017).

Sample

The sample location, Idora, was chosen for several reasons. First, Idora was the only neighborhood in Youngstown which possessed both a comprehensive neighborhood plan as well as received all five of the aforementioned programing areas listed in Chapter 2. Second, crime was listed as resident's top concern in the Idora neighborhood plan. Third, due to YNDC's intensive work in the neighborhood since its inception, there was an adequate summary of programing data that was available (listed in Chapter 2). These anonymous data were provided in spreadsheet format by YNDC through an open request as a fellow practitioner as well as through their annual and quarterly reports which are publicly available. Finally, crime statistics for the neighborhood as well as the city at-large for the time frame of analysis were provided by way of Youngstown State University's Center for Urban and Regional Studies which collects the data on a regular basis. Again, as local practitioner, the anonymous crime data were available by request.

Time Frame

This exploratory, local knowledge case study of the Idora neighborhood examined neighborhood-based community development programing as well as the crime rates of the Idora neighborhood in comparison to the rest of the city of Youngstown over a 7-year period (2010-2016). This time period was chosen because it encompasses the start of YNDC's work in Idora and includes at least seven years of programing thus providing a sample for a meaningful analysis to be conducted.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variables in this analysis include violent crime and property crime. Violent and property crime were defined by FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Part 1 crimes. They include:

Violent Crime:

- Murder

- Rape

- Robbery

- Aggravated Assault

Property Crime:

- Burglary

- Motor Vehicle Theft

- Larceny/Theft

- Arson

The crime data was collected from the FBI UCR and the Youngstown Police Department by way of Youngstown State University's Urban and Regional Studies department. Given that data was obtained from established and verified institutions, its validity and reliability were presumed to be high. (Note: In the Results chapter, "total" crime is defined as either the summary of the aforementioned crimes or by category [ie. violent or property] and is specified table by table).

Independent Variable

The independent variables for this study are the five programing areas of neighborhood-based community development referred to in the conceptual model introduced in Chapter 2 (Planning, Organizing, Housing, Park & Greenspace, Creative Placemaking). Because of the exploratory nature of this thesis, these five items serve as both individual independent variables and as a collective impact strategy in relation to the proposed dependent variables of violent and property crime.

Analytic Plan

In order to test the hypotheses, three stages of analyses were undertaken. These included: descriptive statistics, comparison statistics, and relationship statistics.

Once the data were collected, crime statistics in Idora were compared to the remainder of the city over the 7-year period per category to determine if a meaningful difference in crime was evidenced. This was defined as a decrease of 20% or greater. Each independent variable was also given a numerical value based on the amount of neighborhood programing output that occurred during the specified time period (0 = None, 1 = Minor, 2 = Some, 3 = Major) as well as three years previous when planning and organizing work had begun but not the work of YNDC which had yet to be created. These values represented the degree to which programing occurred during that time period. This was then compared to crime rates per 1,000 residents during those times. Census and American Community Survey information was also reviewed both at the start and at the conclusion of the timeframe to provide a contextual profile.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology in which the research question was addressed and the hypotheses were tested. It identified the research design and stated the

rationale for the design. Justification for choosing the Idora neighborhood as the sample was provided. The type of data as well as its sources were listed, and the analytic plan was also discussed. The next chapter presents the results of the analysis in relation to each hypothesis.

Chapter 4 Results

The data presented in this chapter were used to address the research question and corresponding hypotheses guiding this thesis. The following is a summary regarding the tables used to present the information gathered to address each of the hypotheses.

- Tables 1 and 2 contain demographic info regarding the Idora sample and the city at-large.

- Table 3 compares total Part 1 violent and property crime rates between Idora and the rest of the city.

- Tables 4 and 5 compare total violent and property crime rates between Idora and the rest of the city.

- Tables 6 and 7 compare violent and property crimes rates by type between Idora and the rest of the city.

- Table 8 places a numeric value on the five independent variables in two groupings, three years prior to YNDC's work in Idora and then the seven years of work that followed. This was compared with median crime rates in these two time periods in an attempt to create a programing output valuation.

- Note that for all eight tables, "Change" represents 2010 versus 2016. Also, Tables 3-7 use crime counts instead of rates. This was chosen because of Idora's small geographical area and, consequently, low statistical data sets. It also provides the reader a literal crime number for contextual purposes. Using a rate could be considered misleading given the small sample size.

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Table 1: Population & Housing Data in Idora (2010-2016)

Idora	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change
Population	1,504	1,405	1,638	1,494	1,553	1,570	1,585	5.2%
Minority	88.3%	80.9%	82.3%	77.7%	74.2%	79.2%	73.1%	-17.2%
Poverty	33.6%	38.6%	33.8%	34.2%	42.3%	51.3%	50.5%	50.1%
Med. H/H Income	$20,666	$21,066	$22,220	$22,431	$19,792	$18,917	$22,188	7.4%
Med. Home Value	$45,400	$45,200	$44,300	$43,400	$38,300	$37,500	$36,700	-19.2%
Med. Rent	$437	$450	$458	$639	$729	$738	$731	67.3%

Table 2: Population & Housing Data in Youngtown (2010-2016)

Youngstown	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change
Population	66,982	66,573	66,074	65,469	65,151	64,704	64,360	-3.9%
Minority	50.6%	50.8%	51.8%	51.8%	50.9%	51.5%	50.9%	+0.6%
Poverty	32.7%	33.8%	35.6%	36.4%	37.4%	38.3%	38.0%	+16.2%
Med. H/H Income	$24,381	$24,880	$24,421	$24,454	$24,361	$24,133	$24,448	+0.3%
Med. Home Value	$51,800	$49,900	$48,100	$46,600	$45,400	$44,600	$43,300	-16.4%
Med. Rent	$549	$562	$570	$585	$612	$615	$619	+12.8%

The first set of tables examines population and housing data in Idora versus the city at-large. Idora experienced a +5.4% increase in population while the city-at large experienced a -3.9%. decline. This is a notable statistic given the fact that the neighborhood had lost -23% of its population between 1970-2000 and -37% between 1990-2010 (City of Youngstown, 2008). It is the first time period since decline began in which the neighborhood did not lose population. In some ways, the city's -3.9% decline is somewhat of a positive sign as well given the fact that the city previously lost over -18% population between 2000-2010 (and -61% overall since its peak population in 1930). These estimates suggest population loss throughout the city is slowing.

The minority population in Idora decreased by -17.2% over the time period and was mostly reflected among African Americans which comprise the vast majority of minorities. This was a concern expressed by Rhodes in his 2016 study of the effects of "right-sizing" in the neighborhood (2017). However, the neighborhood still possesses a better than 22 percentage point higher rate (73.1%) compared to citywide rate of 50.9%.

Poverty remains a troubling issue in the neighborhood and the city at-large. However, it's a particularly acute issue in Idora as the percent of those that live at or below the poverty line rose +50.1%. This translates to half the residents of the neighborhood living in poverty (50.5%). In comparison, the city rate rose +16.2% over same time period (38% of residents live in poverty).

Both Idora and the city at-large experienced growth in median household income although both were modest-to-slight increases (+.3% for Youngstown versus +7.4% for Idora). However, at $22,188, Idora's rate is still $2,300 (-9.9%) lower than the city average and the city average is $17,384 (-52.4%) lower than Mahoning County and $27,886 (-72.6%) lower than the state of Ohio.

Interestingly, the median home value fell in both Idora and citywide despite considerable efforts to address longstanding issues such as blight which directly affect home prices. This was particularly surprising in Idora which experienced a -19.2% decline (higher than the city's rate of decline at -16.4%) despite being the only neighborhood to receive all five neighborhood development programing variables over the same period of time.

Another surprising finding was gross rent which rose significantly from $437 to $731 (+67.3%) in Idora. This far surpassed the city rate of +12.8% ($549 to $619). Given Idora's below average median household income, decreasing property values and increasing poverty rate, this is a perplexing statistic. Inflation may account for some of the increased cost of rent, though other factors must be identified in the future given the focus of this thesis.

Table 3: Total Part 1 Crime in Idora vs. Rest of City (2010-2016)

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change
Idora	157	104	113	103	78	75	94	-40.1%
Rest of City	5,209	4,877	4,433	4,110	3,437	3,547	2,959	-43.2%

Table 4: Total Violent Crime in Idora vs. Rest of City (2010-2016)

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change
Idora	13	9	12	10	15	14	12	-7.7%
Rest of City	614	574	583	441	377	454	393	-36.0%

Table 5: Total Property Crime in Idora vs. Rest of City (2010-2016)

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change
Idora	144	95	101	93	63	61	82	-43.1%
Rest of City	4,595	4,303	3,850	3,669	3,060	3,093	2,566	-44.2%

While demographic and housing information is important in understanding broader context and trends happening in Idora as well as the city at-large, this thesis sought to specifically examine crime in Idora compared to the rest of the city. To that end, the first hypothesis asked whether or not neighborhood-based community development would reduce total Part 1 violent crimes in the Idora neighborhood over the 7-year time frame by at least 20%. Table 4 data indicates that this, in fact, did not occur although it did decrease by -7.7% rate. Interestingly, the peak of violent crime took place in Year 5 of programing (15 occurrences) while the lowest rate took place in Year 2 (9 occurrences). However, the rate of decline was greatly outpaced by the remainder of the city (-36.0%).

The second hypothesis stated that neighborhood-based community development would reduce total Part 1 property crimes in Idora over the 7-year time period by at least 20%. Table 5 indicates that this did happen (-43.1%) and to a much greater extent than it did in comparison to violent crime. And while this decline, too, did not outpace the remainder of the city (-44.2%) it kept a very close pace (approximately 1% difference).

Rates of occurrence generally trended downward with a few upward spikes in Year 3 and Year 7, the final year.

The final hypothesis stated that total part 1 crime in Idora would be reduced at a higher rate than the remainder of the city over the 7-year time frame. As could be concluded from the analysis from the previous two hypotheses, this did not occur. The reminder of the city outpaced Idora at a rate of -43.2% versus -40.1%, respectively (Table 3). However, at a difference of only 3.1% and given such a steep decline broadly speaking, this rate could arguably be considered relatively comparable. The next two tables examine violent and property crimes by type for comparison purposes.

Table 6: Violent & Property Crimes by Type - Idora (2010-2016)

Idora	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change
Murder	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	0.0%
Rape	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	+100%
Robbery	6	5	3	2	3	4	5	-16.7%
Aggravated Assault	6	4	9	6	9	8	6	0.0%
Arson	10	9	3	4	1	2	4	-60.0%
Burglary	86	42	52	49	24	16	15	-82.3%
Larceny/Theft	41	34	33	33	30	34	41	0.0%
Motor Vehicle Theft	7	10	13	7	8	9	10	+42.9%

Violent Crime types are first four | Property Crime types are last four

Table 7: Violent & Property Crimes by Type – Rest of City (2010-2016)

Rest of City	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change
Murder	20	18	20	21	16	24	17	-15.0%
Rape	45	38	49	37	35	40	33	-26.7%
Robbery	241	215	237	174	124	145	148	-38.7%
Aggravated Assault	308	303	277	209	202	245	195	-36.7%
Arson	209	256	259	174	112	167	100	-52.2%
Burglary	2,036	2,015	1,670	1,540	1,372	1,122	906	-95.3%
Larceny/Theft	1,813	1,609	1,573	1,567	1,301	1,455	1,249	-31.1%
Motor Vehicle Theft	537	423	348	388	275	349	311	-42.1%

Violent Crime in are first four | Property Crime types are last four

Of note in this analysis is the fact that crime fell in each crime type category in the remainder of the city. However, this was not the case in Idora which experienced gains in rape and motor vehicle theft. Murder was also the same as when programing began in 2010 but did rise to two occurrences in Year 6 (however, there was a rise in murders citywide that year as well). The crime that experienced the most dramatic decline was burglaries which experienced a remarkable -82.3% in Idora and -95.3% throughout the rest of the city. Idora did outpace the rest of the city in the decline of arsons (-60.2% vs. -52.2%). This may be due to the fact that Idora experienced a -59.8% decrease in vacant property between 2008-2018 compared to -40% versus the rest of according to information provided by Youngstown State University.

Table 7: Neighborhood Development Programing Valuation vs. Total Part 1 Crime Rate in Idora (Per 1K Residents)

Idora	Planning	Organizing	Housing	Greenspace	Placemaking	Total	Crime Rate (Per 1K)
2007-2009	3	3	2	1	0	**9**	80.3
2010-2016	2	2	3	3	3	**13**	67.7

0 = None 1 = Minor 2 = Some 3 = Major

Finally, an attempt was made to generate a scale to access programing output versus the crime rate in Idora. This was done by placing a numeric value on the five independent programing variables from the proposed conceptual model both prior to YNDC's work and during the seven years of its programing. The valuations in Table 7 were based on concentrations of programing activity occurring during the two respective time periods (note: point totals should be interpreted *aggregately* due to the importance of the collective impact of the programing variables). This was then compared to median crime rates (per 1,000 residents) of those two time periods in order to generate a value (the 2007-2009 period uses 2009 Census population data to generate the crime rate figure

which was the best data available). According to this model, for every point increase in aggregate programing output, a 3.15 decrease in the crime rate could be detected.

Summary

This chapter examined the results of the data which sought to address the core research question of the thesis and test its respective hypotheses. It was shown that total violent as well as property crime did decline over the seven-year time period, however, not at a rate expectedly higher than the rest of the city. Only one of the three hypotheses tested positive. Individual violent and property crime rates as well as demographic and housing data were also examined in order to provide deeper context and analysis. Finally, independent programing variables were compared to median crimes rates in two time periods (prior to and during YNDC's work in Idora) and a point scale was generated. The model found that for every point increase in aggregate programing output, a 3.15 decrease in the crime rate could be detected. The final chapter will discuss limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to explore the relationship between neighborhood-based community development and its impact on crime by examining a seven year period of work in the Idora neighborhood of Youngstown, Ohio. This was done through the lens of Collective Efficacy theory and specifically by looking at five independent programing variables which had been shown to reduce crime in other communities. These programing variables were then applied to the work of the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation in which output was summarized both citywide and in the Idora neighborhood. Three hypotheses were presented, one suggesting that Part 1 violent crime would be reduced by at least 20%, a second that Part 1 property crime would be reduced by at least 20%, and a third that total Part 1 crimes would be reduced at a greater rate than the remainder of the city. Crime data was collected as well as demographic and housing data for additional analysis and context.

The results concluded that violent and property crimes were, indeed, lowered but only property crime exceeded the 20% threshold. Also, total Part 1 crime in Idora was not lowered at a greater rate than the remainder of the city thus positively supporting only one of the three hypotheses. Demographic and housing data showed a mixed profile of both groups under study. In the Idora sample, population increased for the first time in at least 40 years and median household increased slightly but poverty and rental rates increased dramatically while property values decreased. With the exception of population, most of the other categories for the Idora neighborhood were either negatively above or below city averages (and city averages are well below county and state averages). Finally, a model was created in which to generally measure programing

output in relation to crime. The findings suggest for every aggregate point increase in programing production, there was a 3.15 reduction in the crime rate.

Overall, the research suggested that crime was reduced citywide but it is ultimately inconclusive as to what degree neighborhood-based community development effected the change in Idora given that crime in the remainder of the city declined at an even higher rate. It could be because of differing demographics as evidenced in Tables 1 and 2 which show the Idora neighborhood more vulnerable socio-economically. Given the amount of transformation the neighborhood has undergone since YNDC's work began in 2010, the findings as a whole were somewhat surprising. The following sections discuss possible limitations as well as recommendations for future research which may prove helpful in diving deeper into this exploratory case study.

Limitations

There are several caveats and/or limitations which should be considered regarding this thesis. First, it should be noted that the author of this thesis has spent a great deal of his professional time working in the field of community development in Youngstown (although not as an employee of YNDC or having done any programming in the Idora neighborhood). That said, it is hoped that the research adequately demonstrated that YNDC's work and its possible impact on crime in Idora was self-evident and could not have been influenced by the researcher in a way that would have resulted in a preferred outcome and/or biased conclusion. Rather, the researcher sought to utilize his professional expertise to help meaningfully examine a potentially important approach to crime prevention in the field of Criminal Justice. Possessing a deep understanding of the

nature of this work as well as the community in which it was carried out hopefully allowed for a more contextualized and thorough examination of the topic.

With that said, there are research-specific limitations to discuss with perhaps the largest being the inability to gauge to what extent structural socioeconomic issues have on crime rates in Idora. These factors have been prevalent in the neighborhood for multiple decades. The degree to which these challenges exist as compared to the remainder of the city may provide a different "starting point" and, perhaps, limitation in relation to the extent crime could be impacted by neighborhood community development work over the period of time analyzed. To be sure, Idora began with higher rates of crime and poverty than the remainder of the city. This topic was selected with an understanding that such issues are longstanding, complex and beyond the intended scope or focus of this thesis which was to evaluate how neighborhood planning and development impacts crime *regardless* of a neighborhood's socioeconomic conditions. As the results suggests, it may have had an impact. However, because crime decreased at an even higher rate throughout the city than Idora suggests that there may have been something larger at play in relation to crime reduction in Youngstown.

To that end, other factors to consider could include policing dynamics such as different or more regular patrolling using crime hot spot and criminal network mapping, increased use of technology such as gunshot detection software, incorporation of community policing and youth intervention programming such as the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (www.cirvyoungstown.org), and several different iterations of new police department leadership.

From a resident perspective, neighborhood group organizing increased significantly throughout Youngstown during the time period analyzed as well as several years prior to it. This increased organization coupled with the mainstream use of communication technology such as smart phones for group texting, social media, photos and videos to either better alert neighbors or report crimes to the police may have contributed to the overall crime decline by way of deterrence. However, this is not possible to know given the data used in this thesis.

Finally, in thinking more about the third hypothesis, it should also be noted that the city at-large is not a pure control given that some of the same treatments have also been applied to other neighborhoods, most notably large scale demolition of vacant and abandoned property, a significant contributor to crime as noted in the literature review. YNDC has also conducted a number of its planning and development initiatives in other select neighborhoods throughout the city (although none to the degree as Idora). To what extent these efforts have impacted crime rates in other parts of the city is difficult to know but it should be noted regardless. Perhaps a comparison to another neighborhood of similar composition as Idora may have been a more appropriate analysis (more on this below).

Recommendations for Future Research

Evaluating crime, demographic and housing data was important when seeking to answer the research question in this thesis. However, there is additional data that could be added to strengthen this research. Perhaps the most important would be to include a survey which assesses resident's *perception* of safety. This would provide an important qualitative insight (and quantitative depending how it was structured). While statistics

may show that crime has been reduced in Idora, it would be interesting to know whether residents actually *feel* safer. Certainly, this is an important metric when it comes to improving safety and the quality of life within a neighborhood. However, should survey work be pursued, it will be important to gather input from those who have both lived in Idora prior to YNDC's work as well as those newer to the neighborhood. Comparing the perspective of this range of residents will be necessary in assembling a proper assessment.

As mentioned in the previous section, another consideration would be to compare Idora to another neighborhood of similar demographic composition rather that the remainder of the city as a whole. Indeed, this was done by YNDC in one particular grant application in 2012. (Coincidently, it was neighborhood which is now the focus of a three-year Department of Justice crime reduction grant in which YNDC is a partner organization). An "apples-to-apples" neighborhood comparison may provide a more appropriate analysis. Going a few steps further, mapping the "hot spots" of crime in the respective neighborhoods would also be useful. Many times crime can be concentrated in a few blocks, streets, intersections, businesses or houses in a neighborhood thus skewing the overall context of crime in the area as a whole. This was not done in Idora but it would be interesting and potentially important information to know moving forward.

Extending the timeline for review in Idora would also be recommended. As noted in the Idora neighborhood profile and as measured in Table 8, planning and neighborhood organizing work began several years prior to the formation of YNDC in 2010. This work resulted in the dismantling of large-scale gang activity as well as the closure of three

problem corner stores, thus affecting crime statistics. This could be important data to include should future study of the neighborhood conducted.

Finally, a notable component excluded from this research proposal is the role of the Youngstown Police Department. There's no dispute as to importance of quality policing in helping make neighborhoods safer. Indeed, many neighborhood development strategies include community policing as part of their efforts. Youngstown does possess a community police program which has worked with the Idora Neighborhood Association (and other neighborhood groups) to address specific issues over the years. However, for purposes of this research, this factor was not included since it does not fall within the definition of neighborhood-based community development programing. A survey among police officers could provide a useful insight in attempting to better understand the crime decline not only in Idora but also citywide during the time period examined in this thesis.

Summary

The chapter was provided a summary of the major finding, limitations and recommendations for future in relation to the findings generated in this thesis. As a larger goal, this thesis, in part, sought to highlight the growing body of research that examines the impact of community development and its relation to public safety. To that end, one of the more interesting initiatives taking place nationally is the Department of Justice's Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction (CBCR) program. Launched in 2012, the goal of program is to:

> (target) a specific geographic area within a community with high levels of crime
> or types of crime in order to most effectively direct resources and to positively
> influence multiple social disorganization factors, such as concentration of high-

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risk residents, limited infrastructure, collective efficacy, and neighborhood

physical conditions. (www.bja.gov/programdetails).

There are over 60 cities throughout the nation who have or are currently

participating in these three-year programs. Each focuses on comprehensive, multi-faceted

approaches to reducing neighborhood level crime. Participants include residents,

businesses, community development organizations and the police. In fact, Youngstown is

included among them and YNDC is a central participant. The Local Initiatives Support

Corporation (LISC), a national community development organization which provides

research support and technical assistance to the CBCR initiative, recently released a study

on the effects of this work in three neighborhoods and found as much as a 41% decline in

crime incidents compared to what they would have been without the coordinated, multi-

sector strategy (Walker & Winston, 2017). The outcome of Youngstown's initiative will

be summarized at the completion of the 3-year program period and should be reviewed

by those interested in this topic.

The other intent of this thesis was to provide an examination of how the field of

Community Development may contribute to the field of Criminal Justice. It is hoped that

the research produced from this thesis will help supplement, complement and/or build

upon the growing body of research being produced by initiatives such as the CBCR

program and LISC which seek to better understand how collective efficacy, community

development and law enforcement can combine to produce comprehensive, coordinated

approaches to improving public safety in distressed neighborhoods in communities such

as Youngstown. Such collaboration will be increasingly important moving forward, to be

sure.

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