



The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Training and Technical Assistance program developed the PSN Research in Brief series to provide a summary report of scholarly articles, studies, and publications relevant to the PSN program. This fifth issue of the PSN Research in Brief series summarizes the following study by John Macdonald, Viet Nguyen Viet, Shane T. Jensen, and Charles C. Branas published in the *Journal of Experimental Criminology*: **Reducing Crime by Remediating Vacant Lots: The Moderating Effect of Nearby Land Uses.**¹

BACKGROUND:

- Crime tends to be concentrated in a small number of places and to remain relatively stable over time.
- Physical disorder has been shown to affect how community members interact with their environment and each other.
- Most studies focusing on the effects of physical disorder on crime do not consider how surrounding areas may affect outcomes.

THEORY AND PRACTICE:

- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), situational crime prevention, routine activities theory, crime pattern theory, and broken windows theory all support the idea that surveillance in many forms can help suppress crime.
- This study employs quasi-experimental and experimental methods to examine the effects of vacant lot remediation programs on crime as well as how the areas surrounding those lots affect outcomes.
- This program followed what has become known as a “greening” strategy that included removing trash and debris, planting grass, and installing small wooden fences. Lots are maintained twice monthly from April through October.

STUDY OUTCOMES:²

- Examining 12,788 vacant lots, of which 4,046 were treated between 2008 and 2016, researchers found that greening vacant lots reduced crime.
- Greening a vacant lot has a greater influence on total crime when the lot is not in proximity to a train station or an establishment that sells alcohol (bar, club, restaurant, etc.).

1 Macdonald, J., Nguyen, V., Jensen, S. T., & Branas, C. C. (2022). Reducing crime by remediating vacant lots: the moderating effect of nearby land uses. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 18(3): 639-664.

2 This article is part of a series of studies of the outcomes of remediating vacant lots on crime. The other articles include the following: Branas et al. (2018). Citywide cluster randomized trial to restore blighted vacant land and its effects on violence, crime, and fear. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115(12): 2946-2951; Moyer et al. (2019). Effect of remediating blighted vacant land on shootings: a citywide cluster randomized trial. *American Journal of Public Health* 109(1): 140-144.