

Community Safety

Summary of Key Findings

Community safety includes traffic, pedestrian and cyclist safety; crime and fear of crime; and personal safety. Elements that impact community safety include street and pedestrian conditions, lighting, graffiti, and tolerance of illegal activities. Key findings include:

- Injuries and deaths of pedestrians and cyclists in recent years raise significant concern and promote the feeling of an unsafe physical environment in Globeville and Elyria Swansea.
- There is a mismatch between reported crime rates and resident perceptions of criminal activity. Property crime is down significantly in both neighborhoods, yet fear of crime remains high.
- Street lighting is inadequate and is accentuated by lack of porch light use by many residents.
- The presence of graffiti, darkness, illicit activities and stray animals leads to a fear of crime.

How the Neighborhood Plans Can Improve Community Safety

Improvements in the physical environment such as street safety and lighting, as well as increased crime reporting and enforcement, can improve community safety. Mitigation measures to prevent crashes can likely reduce crashes that lead to injuries and deaths, and more street lights in the neighborhoods will likely reduce crime and perceptions of crime.

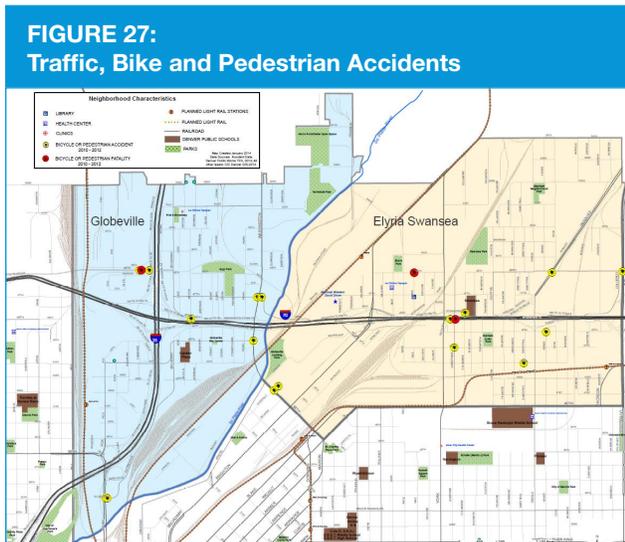


Community Safety in Globeville and Elyria Swansea Today

Traffic, Bike and Pedestrian Safety

From 2010-2012 there were 21 accidents in the community involving injuries or fatalities to cyclists or pedestrians. Areas of high concern, with multiple injury accidents include 46th and Josephine in Elyria Swansea, where there was one fatality; 47th and Washington in Globeville; and 48th and Bannock (frontage road just west of I-25) in Globeville, also with a fatality (Figure 27).

These pedestrian- car and bicycle-car crashes need to be thoroughly reviewed to understand the nature of the crashes. Specific attributes can be studied to understand these crashes and to develop mitigation measures, including: crash circumstance (time of day, weather); crash type, built environment contributing factors (such as lighting or blind spots), and pre-crash behavior of the road users.

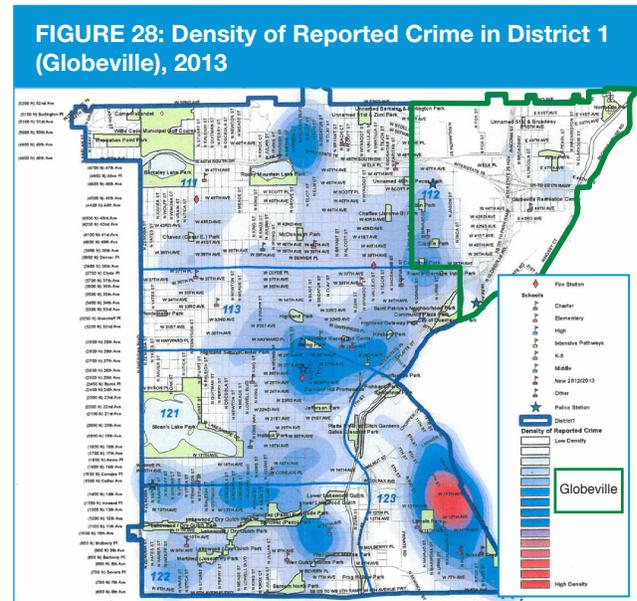


SOURCE: Denver Public Works/Denver Police Department 2014

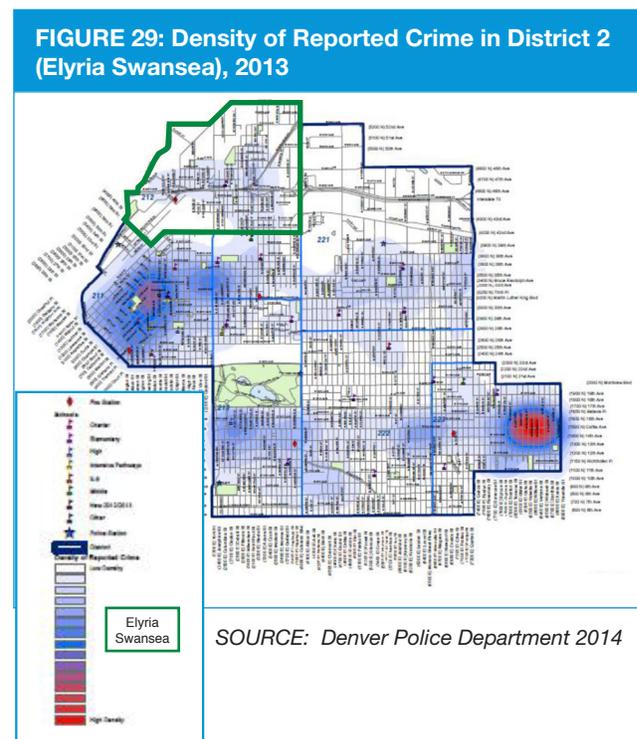
Additionally, the multiple at-grade railroad track crossings in the neighborhoods create the potential for pedestrians to cross paths with trains, and at least one recent incident resulted in a tragic outcome. The time that the trains take for switching activities can block the roads for over 30 minutes at a time, and pedestrians are tempted to jump between train cars just to get where they need to go.

Crime Incidence and Crime Reporting

There are several different ways to assess crime. One is the number of calls that the police receive in each neighborhood per year. In Figures 28 and 29 below, the lightest colors show the least amount of crime reported, and the darker blue and red colors show the most crime reported. By this measure, in 2013, both Globeville and Elyria Swansea had some of the lowest amounts of reported crime compared to other neighborhoods within their police district.



SOURCE: Denver Police Department 2014



SOURCE: Denver Police Department 2014

Another measure of crime is to compare the number of reported offenses from one period to the next. In the first quarter of 2014, crime in Elyria Swansea was down 17% compared with the first quarter of 2013. Property crime in particular decreased by 35%. In Globeville, property crime was down by 11% over the same period.¹

The Police Department uses the “3-E” approach to crime prevention: *education, enforcement, and engineering*. This approach has been effective in both Globeville and Elyria Swansea to reduce crime and improve safety.

In Globeville, the Police Department met with the neighborhood organization in summer 2013 after it was newly redistricted into District 1. Residents’ number one complaint was loud car stereos (“boomers”) around Argo Park and 45th, and 47th and Washington. District 1 began with education outreach: they placed electronic signboards on the roads for two weeks saying “Loud stereos will be cited in two weeks.” Then, after two weeks, officers started issuing citations for loud stereos. After that combination of efforts, the use of loud stereos was greatly reduced in the neighborhood.

Engineering can also come into play. To reduce speeding near Garden Place Academy, District 1 put speed trailers out to clock speeds, then increased officer presence and started writing tickets. Finally, they requested that the Public Works Department paint contrasting stripes on the crosswalk to improve safety.

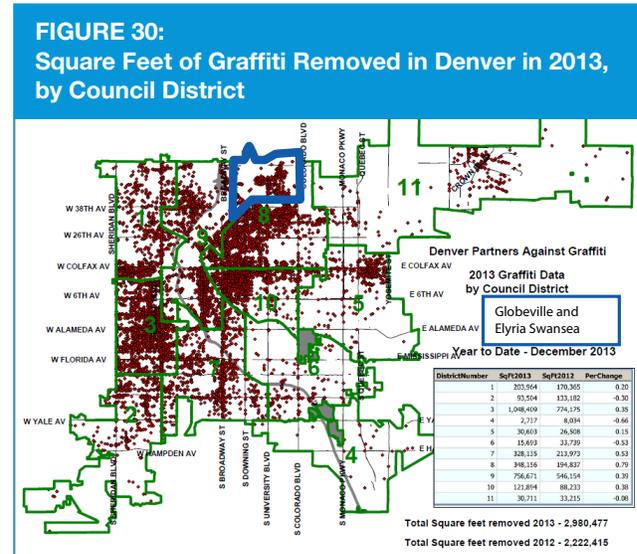
In Elyria Swansea, District 2 officers cite increased reporting as one of the factors in lowering crime in recent months. District 2 also uses social media to connect with citizens, and has reached out to taxi drivers for additional “eyes on the street” during daytime hours. Spanish speaking officers help to ‘break the walls down’ with monolingual residents and build trust. Also, District 2 offers free consultations with local businesses and residents for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) tailored to their location. The District completes about five to eight CPTEDs per month.

Both Districts have a Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) and meet monthly to share information and hear residents’ concerns.

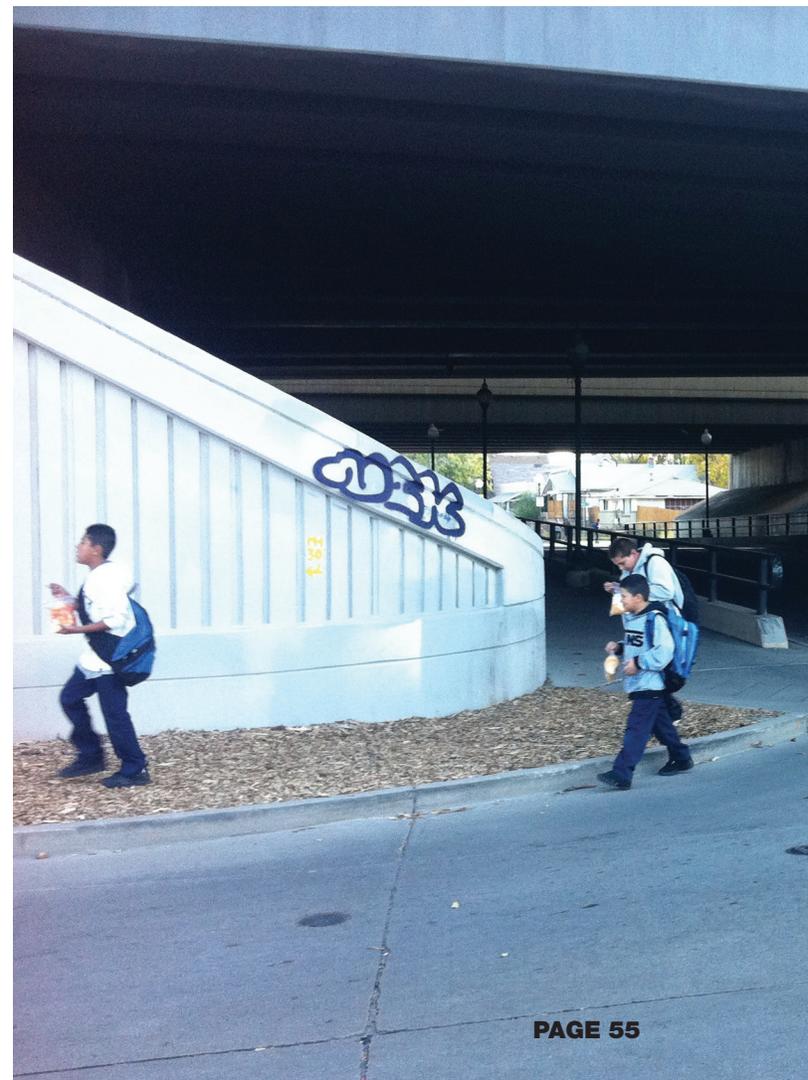
Graffiti

The Denver Police Department tracks reporting and removal of graffiti throughout the City (Figure 30). From 2012 to 2013, there was a 38% increase in the square footage of graffiti tags removed in all of Council District 9 (which includes Globeville and Elyria Swansea). The City cleans graffiti in response to citizen

reports to 3-1-1, or City staff (Police and Public Works) identifying graffiti tags for removal. The increase in the amount of graffiti removed could indicate increased reporting of graffiti by residents. When graffiti is reported and removed quickly, “taggers” learn that the community will not tolerate graffiti, and they tend to move elsewhere.



SOURCE: Denver Police Department 2014



Community Safety in Globeville and Elyria Swansea Today continued

Perception of Crime

In contrast to these efforts, though, Globeville and Elyria Swansea residents are concerned about crime in their neighborhoods. Through the neighborhood planning process, interviews and surveys, residents state that they are concerned about graffiti, gangs and drug use. In addition, residents cite meth houses and homes where marijuana is grown indoors, often with children present, as factors that create fear in the neighborhood. Also, the recently legalized marijuana industry in Colorado has produced a large demand for warehouse space for indoor marijuana “grow operations.” Globeville in particular has many warehouses that contain marijuana grow operations. While the use is legal by zoning, grow facilities are targets of burglary and robbery due to the value of the marijuana seeds, plants, and buds.²

One reason for the gap between actual crime rates and fear of crime may be that neighborhood conditions cause residents to feel unsafe. Another reason may be that residents under-report crime. One community member said that the thinking may be that this environment is normal:

“...what are the police going to do? ... If I've heard shots fired (numerous) times this week already, why would I call on this one?”³

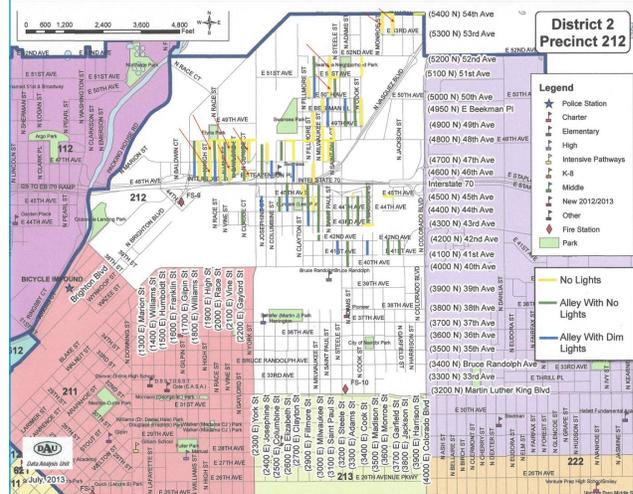
The paradox is that if crime is not reported, the police cannot respond and provide more resources to combat criminal activity (i.e., more frequent patrols, etc). This sets up a repetitive cycle for crime – and the perception of crime – to continue.

Lighting

A recent survey by the Denver Police Department found areas in each neighborhood with inadequate street lighting (indicated in yellow in Figure 31). In Elyria Swansea, many of the streets north of 46th Ave do not have street lights, and some alleys have no lights or are dimly lit.⁴

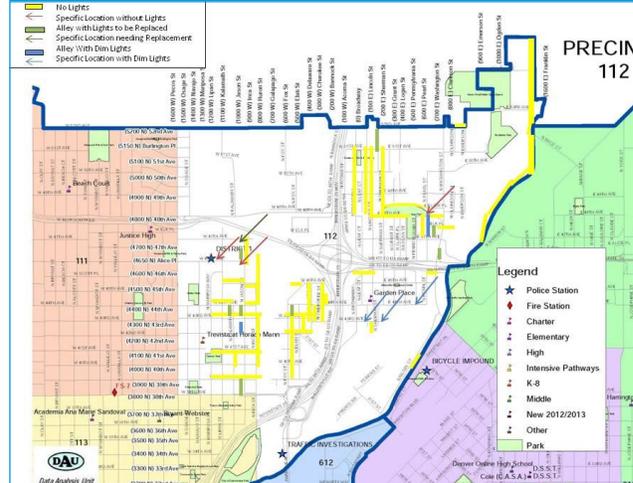
Similarly, the Globeville lighting survey revealed several streets and locations that also need new light poles or bulbs (indicated in yellow in Figure 32). In addition, approximately 90% of residences in Globeville did not have porch lights on at night. This contributes to a general feeling that the neighborhood is dark.⁵

FIGURE 31:
Lighting Survey of Elyria Swansea Neighborhood, 2014



SOURCE: Denver Police Department 2014

FIGURE 32:
Lighting Survey of Globeville Neighborhood, 2014



SOURCE: Denver Police Department 2014

Perception of Safe and Unsafe Places

Residents in Globeville and Elyria Swansea say that certain places in the neighborhood feel safer than others. In a public meeting in January 2014, community members identified areas where they feel safe or unsafe due to traffic accidents or crime. The “safest” places included Garden Place and Swansea Elementary schools, and Argo Park. A sample of children at both elementary schools were surveyed in 2013 about feeling safe; about 50% of children reported “always” feeling safe when they are outdoors in their neighborhoods.⁶

Reasons that residents feel unsafe include accidents, crime or personal safety, stray dogs in the neighborhood, or poor lighting, which was a repeated concern particularly in the parks (Argo, Swansea, Northside) and in industrial areas.⁷

At the neighborhood planning meeting in January 2014, residents indicated on a map those places where they feel most unsafe (*Figure 33*):

FIGURE 33:
Places Where Residents Feel Unsafe Due to Accidents or Crime, 2014

	Due to accidents	Due to crime / personal safety
Globeville	45th and Washington	East of Broadway from 47th to 49th
	51st and Washington	Along Platte River trail
Elyria Swansea	47th and Brighton Blvd	Between 47th and 48th, Williams and High
	47th and York (RR tracks)	

SOURCE: Denver Department of Environmental Health 2014

How Community Safety Affects Health

Traffic, pedestrian and bicycle safety and real and perceived crime in a community all contribute to a sense of community safety. In addition to pedestrians and cyclists being injured in accidents, other factors that can contribute to fears of an unsafe environment include physical signs of disorder such as abandoned buildings, graffiti, litter, and loitering. Several studies have found that the amount of physical disorder in a neighborhood is linked to fear of crime.⁸ Physical neighborhood design that encourages interaction and a sense of community has been shown not only to reduce crime, but also to create a sense of community safety and security.⁹

Slower vehicle speeds result in fewer pedestrian injuries. With vehicle speeds below 20 miles per hour (mph) the probability of serious or fatal injury is less than 20% of the probability of injuries at higher speeds; with speeds above 35 mph, most injuries are fatal or incapacitating.¹¹

Bike lanes keep bicyclists safer. One study found the risk of injuries to cyclists was lowest on roads with on-road bike routes, on-road marked bike lanes, and off-road bike paths, compared to roads without any of these. Street lighting and paved surfaces also improve cyclist safety.¹²

Traffic Crashes and Injuries

There has been a lot of research conducted on the relationship between traffic crashes and injuries to passengers, cyclists and pedestrians. Traffic speed, traffic volume and road design are key factors that affect how many injuries there are in an accident and how severe they may be.

One review of 16 research studies found 11% fewer road traffic injuries in areas designed to reduce traffic speeds with features such as narrow travel lanes, medians, sidewalks and street trees.¹⁰



How Community Safety Affects Health continued

Crime and Perception of Safety

Actual crime activity in a community and fear of crime can both affect health. Victims of crime can experience direct health impacts including physical injuries or psychological trauma. Area-wide violent crime is associated with a range of health issues, such as more heart disease and less physical activity.¹³

A study of more than 10,000 people in England found that fear of crime was associated with poorer mental health, reduced physical functioning, and lower quality of life. Participants exercised less, saw friends less often, and participated in fewer social activities, and reported greater fear, more likelihood of depression and worse mental health than less fearful participants.¹⁴

Research suggests that people do not all experience fear of crime equally. One study found that fear of crime affects certain sub-groups in particular, such as low-income mothers, and resulted in less social activity and less health-promoting community involvement.¹⁵

Fear of crime often stems from the condition of the physical environment in a community. Broken sidewalks, poor lighting, graffiti, and boarded up buildings can signal a sense of social disorder,¹⁶ as well as fewer “eyes on the street,” resulting in increased fears for personal safety. What is known as the “Broken Windows” theory suggests that a neighborhood’s physical condition sends out messages about the kinds

of behavior that are permitted. The author explains, “If a broken window is unrepaired, all the windows will soon be broken. Broken windows are a signal that no one cares.”¹⁷

How people perceive their environment influences their decision to walk in the neighborhood, thereby impacting their level of physical activity. Feeling safe, seeing an appealing aesthetic environment, and having a connected street layout with close destinations are all necessary to increase walking.¹⁸

Lighting and CPTED

Street lighting has an important role in crime prevention. Improved street lighting is thought to affect crime in two ways: by increasing surveillance, thus deterring potential offenders, and by signifying community investment and pride in an area.¹⁹ In 13 different studies of street lighting in communities in the United Kingdom and United States, there was a 21% drop in crime in places that improved street lighting compared to similar areas that did not improve lighting.²⁰

Another practice is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED. This uses specific design practices such as improving visibility to increase surveillance and limiting points of entry in public areas to control access. CPTED has shown some promising results in reducing crime but the research is still limited.²¹

Prediction: How the Neighborhood Plans Can Affect Community Safety

Vehicle crashes leading to injuries and death can likely be reduced through analysis of crash circumstances and implementation of mitigation measures such as design and engineering, education, and/or enforcement programs for intersections where multiple accidents now occur.

Increases in number of street lights in the neighborhoods will likely lead to reduced crime and perceptions of crime, and increased feelings of community safety.

Prompt reporting and removal of graffiti will likely discourage “taggers” from repeatedly targeting the community, and likely lead to increased perceptions of community safety.

Recommendations to Improve Community Safety

Health Recommendations that Can Be Addressed by the Globeville and Elyria Swansea Neighborhood Plans

1. Explore measures to reduce the incidence of pedestrian and bicycle injury crashes at locations where multiple crashes have occurred. (See Section 8, Recommendation 4.A)
2. Install new and/or upgraded street lighting per the recommendations of the Denver Police Department lighting survey. (See Section 8, Recommendation 15.A)
3. Prioritize street infrastructure improvements, including sidewalks, bike lanes, bus stop furnishings, and intersection crossings. (See Section 8, Recommendation 2.A)
4. Review truck routes in the neighborhoods to improve environmental quality, safety and connectivity. (See Section 8, Recommendation 11.A)
5. Explore solutions to reduce the negative health impacts from trains. These could include “Quiet Zones,” or grade separation of trains from other modes of transportation. (See Section 8, Recommendation 7.A)

6. Enforce regulations regarding graffiti, vandalism, public drug use, stray animals and property maintenance to increase safety. (See Section 8, Recommendation 21.A)
7. Increase education and outreach to citizens about pedestrian safety, in anticipation of increased pedestrian activity with the upcoming redevelopment projects. (See Section 8, Recommendation 22.A)

Health Recommendations that Can Be Addressed by Other Means by the City, private sector, or nongovernmental organizations

8. The City and private developers should work together to encourage crime prevention through use of environmental design principles in new development and redevelopment projects. (See Section 8, Recommendation 9.B)



References & Endnotes

¹ In May 2013 the Denver Police Department implemented the Unified Summons and Complaint (US&C) process. This process unifies multiple types of paper citations, excluding traffic tickets, into an electronic process. That information is transmitted to the Denver Sheriff, County Court, City Attorney and District Attorney through a data exchange platform as needed. As a result of this process a reported offense is generated which was previously not captured in National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). It is difficult to compare current US&C data to data collected prior to May 2013 under the old system.

² Denver Police Department District 1, interviews, January 2014.

³ Tenney, M (2014). “Stress and the Built Environment” Key Informant Interviews in Globeville and Elyria Swansea, February.

⁴ The Denver Police Department recently conducted lighting surveys in both Globeville and Elyria Swansea as part of a citywide survey effort. Streets and alleys with no lights or dim lights were identified. The Police Department works with Denver Public Works and Xcel Energy to replace street light bulbs that are burnt out, and install new light poles where more light is needed.

⁵ The Police Department is reaching out to residents through flyers and community meetings to encourage them to turn their porch lights on at night. Police District 1 also convenes a monthly Citizens Advisory Group to share updates on crime and safety and ask citizens for their input on the need for additional patrolling in areas of concern. This partnership enables citizens to share in crime prevention and proactive measures to increase safety in the community.

⁶ Group Health Research Institute and University of California Berkeley (2013). Healthy Eating Active Living, Youth Food and Physical Activity Survey: Baseline results for Garden Place Academy (Denver County). Center for Community Health and Evaluation, and Atkins Center for Weight and Health. May.

Group Health Research Institute and University of California Berkeley (2013). Healthy Eating Active Living, Youth Food and Physical Activity Survey: Baseline results for Swansea Elementary (GES County). Center for Community Health and Evaluation, and Atkins Center for Weight and Health. June.

⁷ Tenney, M. (2014).

⁸ Latkin, CA and AD Curry (2003). Stressful neighborhoods and depression: A prospective study of the impact of neighborhood disorder. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 44(1): pp. 34-44. Accessed at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1519814>

⁹ Calhoun, J (2002). National Crime Prevention Council. New Partners for Smart Growth: Building Safe, Healthy, and Livable Communities. 2nd Annual Conference flyer.

¹⁰ Bunn, F, Collier, T, Frost, C, Ker, K, Roberts, I and R Wentz (2003). Traffic calming for the prevention of road traffic injuries: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Injury Prevention*, 9: 200–204.

¹¹ Leaf, WA, and DF Preusser (1999). Literature Review on Vehicle Travel Speeds and Pedestrian Injuries. Washington, D.C.: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. Accessed at: <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/research/pub/HS809012.html>

¹² Conor, C, Reynolds, O, Harris, MA, Teschke, K, Crompton, PA and M Winters (2009). The impact of transportation infrastructure on bicycling injuries and crashes: a review of the literature. *Environmental Health*, 8: 47.

¹³ Lorenc, T, Clayton, S, et al. (2012). Crime, fear of crime, environment, and mental health and wellbeing: Mapping review of theories and causal pathways. *Health and Place*, 18: 757-765.

¹⁴ Stafford, M, Chandola, T, and M Marmot (2007). Association between fear of crime and mental health and physical functioning. *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(11): 2076-2081.

¹⁵ Whitley, R, and M Prince (2005). Fear of crime, mobility and mental health in inner-city London. *UK Social Science & Medicine*, 61(8): 1678–1688.

¹⁶ Lorenc, Clayton, et al. (2012).

¹⁷ RAND Health Research Highlights (2005). Does Neighborhood Deterioration Lead to Poor Health? Accessed at: http://regionalcommunityhealth.pbworks.com/f/RAND_RB9074.pdf

¹⁸ Van Dyck et al. (2013). Environmental perceptions as mediators of the relationship between the objective built environment and walking among socioeconomically disadvantaged women. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 10: 108. Accessed at: <http://www.ijbnpa.org/content/10/1/108>

¹⁹ Welsh, BC, and DP Farrington (2008). Effects of improved street lighting on crime. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 13.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lorenc, Clayton, et al. (2012).