Bethany Broida: (silence)

Hello everyone. I'm just going to wait another couple seconds as folks are still continuing to log on and then we'll get started. (silence)

Okay. Good afternoon. Good morning for those of you where it's still morning. Thank you all for joining us. My name is Bethany Broida. I am the director of communications at the National Criminal Justice Association. It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to our webinar today on place network investigations. PNI is a community violence intervention strategy. As I'm sure you all know, CVI strategies are a very hot topic right now. It's something that those of us at NCJA talk about extensively ever since it was included in the Biden administration's budget proposal. It's an area of emphasis in the new state [inaudible] Justice Assistance Grant solicitation. We spend a lot of our time talking about this, and we're super excited to learn about PNI today. Before we get started and I turn this over to our expert panel of speakers, let me quickly go over a few logistical items.

First, we will be recording today's session. The recording and the slides will be emailed to everyone who registered as well as posted on the NCJA website. As you can probably tell, all of our attendees are muted to reduce background noise. If you have questions, and we hope that you do have questions, we encourage you to submit them using the question and answer box at the bottom of your screen. We have included time for a question and answer period at the end of the presentation. If your question doesn't get answered as part of the main presentation, we will try to get to it during the Q&A. However, you are free to submit your question at any time. If you need to communicate with NCJA staff during the webinar, please submit your comments using the chat feature. Finally, at the end of the session, we'll be launching a short poll. We hope you'll fill this out for us as it'll continue to help us improve our webinar offerings. I would now like to turn it over to our moderator Karhlton Moore, who will introduce our speakers. Thank you.

Karhlton Moore: Thank you, Bethany. As Bethany said, my name is Karhlton Moore and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services. I will be serving as the moderator for today's discussion on place network investigations. We are fortunate to have two outstanding panelists today, Dr. Tamara Herold and Dr. Robin Engel. They were both kind enough to send me shortened versions of their bios. First, for Dr. Herold, Dr. Tamara Herold is an associate professor of criminal justice and graduate director at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She also serves as a chief consultant for the International Association of Chiefs of Police Center for Police Research and Policy. She received her PhD with an emphasis in crime prevention from the University of Cincinnati. She uses the crime science perspective to study the criminological impact of place design and management. Her work helps translate research findings into practice and policy. In 2017, she received a Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing for her role in co-developing the PNI strategy.

With Dr. Engel, she is currently leading implementation of PNI in seven major jurisdictions across the United States. Dr. Robin Engel is a Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati and Director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police/ UC Center for Police Research and Policy. From 2016 to 2019, she served as UC's vice-president for Safety & Reform where her administrative duties included oversight of the daily operations and implementation of comprehensive reform of the University of Cincinnati Police Division. In the aftermath of a critical incident involving the fatal police shooting of an unarmed motorist, Dr. Engel engages in police research and evaluations designed to reduce harm in communities and make police, citizen encounters safer. Promoting best practices through academic practitioner partnerships. She has served as principal investigator for over 80 research grants totaling over $21 million. I wonder how much of that came from the Office of Criminal Justice Services, and has published over 60 research articles, books and chapters, along with dozens of technical report for practitioners. Thank you so much to both of you for being here today, and I will turn things over to Dr. Engel to start.

Robin Engel: Great. Well, thank you, Karhlton, and yeah, thank you for all that funding. It's actually done a lot of great work here in Ohio where I am. But of course we take all those practices that we learn and we take them both nationally and internationally. That's a lot of the work that we're going to be talking about today. Geez, Director Moore, we do go back a long way because violence reduction strategies are not new for our research team or our partnership with OCJS. We're going to be talking a little bit about how far we've come and where we think we need to move forward. Thank you so much for spending your afternoon with us today. Again, I'm Robin Engel with the University of Cincinnati. My colleague here, Dr. Herold is going to help move me along on these slides. I'm not going to talk for very long, which is unusual for me because the true star of the show is Dr. Herold. She helped develop this strategy, and as mentioned, we're implementing it in seven cities across the country. We want you to hear from the expert about what's happening in those communities.

If you'll just move me to the next slide. Just a little bit about our research center here at the University of Cincinnati. We are partnered with the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Our whole point for this research center, we started in 2016 and the idea was to really focus on those urgent policing issues and issues in our communities that are making our communities less safe. That might be through poor or problematic police-community relations or interactions on the street, but it also extends of course, to the violence in our communities. All of our work is really designed to reduce those harms. We do that by translating the existing research that is there to make it usable by practitioners and community members, but also continuing to generate new evidence through large scale studies. This is one of studies that we'll be talking about today. If you'll just move me. Thank you. Before we get started though, I just wanted to set the stage for what do we mean by violence. We're borrowing here actually a definition that was written by Thomas Abt in his book in 2019 that came out, Bleeding Out.

When we're thinking about violence here, we're really talking about what he defines as urban violence. Or that physical force that's occurring on the street and in other public spaces in cities and towns that results or could result in serious injury or death. Most frequently, this is really about firearm violence here in the United States. Of course, in other countries, it manifests itself with different types of weaponry. But here, it's really about violence that's firearm related. We're talking almost predominantly about young men that are engaging in this behavior. Just again, to set that stage for you, we're not really referring to nonlethal violence or sexual violence, violence between intimate partners or family members, we want to stay predominantly focused on what we have learned from many, many years of research. That is, this type of urban or street violence that is linked because it's involved with repeat offenders, repeat victims, and in repeat locations. We know this from dozens and dozens of research studies that have showed that these concentrations of violence are really what's impacting our communities.

I'd also just like to make a note here that, as we see, and I think we're all here today, because in part we see that the violence is increasing. I don't need to read off the statistics to you. We do know that we are in an upswing, we're on an uptick in violence in these communities. Every time I think about or read those statistics anyway, it always brings me back to those are actual lives and communities and families that are disrupted through violence. We also know that the violence against law enforcement officers is also increasing. If you take a look at the LEOKA data, it shows in the past five years ... Now, this was prior to 2020. So 2014 to 2019. A 26% increase in the number of assaults with injury that law enforcement officers are experiencing. We have community members that are being harmed by violence. We have law enforcement officers that are being harmed by violence, and we have the same old strategies. Some of them are effective, some of them less effective.

Bt we decided we really need to do something a little bit different, and we're going to be talking about that today. Tamara, if you'll move me to the next slide. Thank you so much. What we do know about current approaches to violence reduction, community led and police led. That's generally how we separate these out. When you think about community led strategies, a lot of these are focused on the public health model, viewing violence as a disease. They encourage multifaceted approaches to violence prevention, mobilizing community stakeholders for responses. When you look at the body of evidence around the community led strategies, what we see is generally, there's less evidence regarding effectiveness. Now this is twofold. First, we have much fewer number of rigorous studies that have been done in this area. It's hard to demonstrate that these strategies are working when we're not even really testing them. A lack of evidence could be simply that we're not in the field as researchers getting the job done. But where we do see demonstrated impact, a lot of times it's less of an impact than some of the other police led strategies that we've seen.

Now, that's not always the case, but generally speaking, the community led strategies have less evidence to support their work moving forward. I think that's a real shame, and something that we need to be doing a lot of work around. I'm really pleased to hear that the Biden-Harris administration is moving forward with community led approaches. Now, police led approaches, these are strategies by law enforcement that really it's leading by their activities and their partnerships predominantly around problem solving strategies. These include a whole host of offender-based, place-based and community-based approaches. You can have a police led violence reduction strategy that's community based, but may not be community led. Here, the studies are generally showing mixed finding regarding effectiveness. Some strategies are very effective, but they also oftentimes have unintended consequences in terms of significantly increasing our incarceration population, increasing racial and ethnic disparities. Sometimes the effectiveness comes at a cost.

What we wanted to do with this strategy, is really bridge the gap between both community led and police led strategies. Also, focus in on strategies that are effective, but also have less of the unintended consequences that are really problematic for communities. Where does that leave us? Well, we do know that the key elements of a successful initiative, first they're highly focused. Second, most of the successful initiatives, both community led and police led, are evidence-based strategies that are being implemented. They often rely on strong investigations and intelligence. Now, this might be police investigations and intelligence, but it can also be community based intelligence and information. That you're focusing in the right places at the right times with the right people. Strong investigations is really critical. We also know that advanced analytics, right from the beginning when we incorporate these things in these strategies, that's what's working. But the effective partnerships piece, that's what keeps things moving along and make sure that everyone's on the same page. Robust management and accountability systems also critical.

Then finally, this community support piece, I really cannot say enough about this. You can have the most successful strategy in terms of actually reducing violence, but if the community doesn't support it, then you still have problems there and are going to continue to have sustained problems over time. What you don't see on this slide though, is the most critical key element of a successful initiative, is its ability to be sustained over time. I don't have it on this slide because the truth is, we wouldn't be in this position if we had violence reduction strategies that have shown the sustainability for the long-term violence reduction strategies that we need to have and gather. That's where PNI comes in and that's why I'm so excited about this. Tamara, next slide please. I'm going to talk just very quickly about our seven locations here. This is funding that's been provided by Arnold Ventures. We just kicked off. The funding came through in 2020, but because of COVID, of course, we got a little bit of a delayed start. In January, Tamara and I really sort of started moving this out in earnest.

What we're doing in these seven communities, is we're providing technical assistance and training at no cost to those communities. We're developing resources and tools that will then share, not just with these seven communities, but across the country. They also are involved in a peer to peer exchange. We have built in robust implementation and outcome evaluation, because we need to make sure that this is effective before we really push forward with all of that work. I'm so pleased that we have Dr. Herold with us, who's going to take us on an overview of what is PNI. I keep referring to it, but now she'll tell you all about it.

Tamara Herold: Excellent. Thank you so much, Robin. Yes, thank you everybody for being here today. I'm really passionate about the strategy and I'm really looking forward to questions at the end about it. I'll preface all of this by saying that we really tried in the beginning to think differently about what we can do. As Dr. Engel said, the community led strategies, the police led strategies, what could we take that we know works, combine that and create a new model for public safety. When I think about place network investigations, when I'm describing it to others, I say, "We're really trying to answer these three questions here." This is where we begin. First of all, how can we shift our thinking and our approach? For some people, they see this and they'll say, "Well, we're doing some of that." That's true. In most jurisdictions, there's elements of this going on, but it hasn't been collated in a way where it's very focused, it's very coordinated, and we really the impact of the very few resources we have in a lot of communities to address violence. We try to shift our thinking about public safety in general.

Second, we really want to lessen our reliance on traditional justice system practices. You know the famous saying, you cannot arrest your way out of a problem. In fact, when you're focused on that type of strategy, and I'll talk about this in just a second, we have just as Dr. Engel pointed out, many unintended consequences. We want to move away from this. Then third, we want sustained reduction. Dr. Angel and I have worked for a long time in communities working with police and community organizations to drive down crime and we're almost always successful. Here's where we're not successful at, is that sustainability over time. The question is, why? This is what we try to address with the PNI strategy. Going back to this traditional justice system reliance, we have lots of police led strategies where we can put officers in particular locations where crime is concentrated and we can drive down violence. There's an entire science behind it. We know where to put them, for how long they should be there, and even Dr. Engel with one of her most recent studies, what police should be doing in those locations to drive down crime.

Here's the problem with just using that as a strategy. We can drive it down, but it will not be long-term. As soon as redeploy our resources elsewhere, crime comes right back up. We generate large numbers of costly arrests. Obviously if aggressive and sustained, this does very little to improve police-community relations. It also places officers at risk. I'll show some stats related to that in just a second. Over time, we see those justice disparities, those racial disparities in justice that Dr. Engel referenced to because often our crime is concentrated in our most vulnerable communities, and that becomes problematic. Here's the other thing. It leaves place dynamics intact. Why that's important is because everything we know about crime, as Dr. [inaudible] alluded to, is that crime is highly concentrated. Neighborhoods aren't bad. Entire groups of people are not bad. Entire groups of people are not victims. What happens is, crime is highly concentrated among places, offenders and victims. It follows what we call the 80-20 rule. Even in high crime communities, most places have little to no crime. But there are some places that really generate the vast majority of crime.

This strategy actually came out of an initiative in Cincinnati 2015. Gun violence was increasing and we were trying to figure out what to do about it. We identified these tiny micro-locations, violent micro-locations, one to two blocks in radius across the city. There were 23 of them, and these have been violent for years and years. When we looked at what was going on inside of those locations, they makeup only 1.4% of the city's landmass. But you can see here in this chart, there's a disproportionate amount of serious crime, violent crime, and most importantly, shootings that are occurring in these tiny micro-locations. 42% of people in the City of Cincinnati who've been shot in the city at that time had been shot in one of these tiny micro-locations. The question was, what is going on in these tiny areas that's driving so many shootings across the city? Also, interesting, that very same year, we had an officer who was shot and killed in the City of Cincinnati. So we thought, well, let's see what's going on with officers in these areas.

Those same locations making up that tiny proportion of land mass had a disproportionate number of officer injuries occurring in those locations, as well as noncompliant behaviors that were likely to lead to officer injuries. From an officer safety and wellness perspective, these places need to be addressed obviously. But from a community holistic strategy, to really think about what we're trying to do to improve the quality of life in these communities, these tiny micro hotspots, we need to do something differently in them. My background is in something called crime science. As Director Moore knows, I've spent a lot of time working with him, figuring out why some places have tons of crime, lots of violent crime, and other places don't. That's kind of my expertise. In this place is hot, this place is not. We started this initiative with a completely different question that led us down an entirely new path. We wanted to look at the dynamics that were sustaining violence in those hotspots over time. Our question was, why did the same locations remain violent year after year after year?

For any of you, who've been working in violence reduction for several decades, you'll know the same places that were problems several decades ago, are often the same places that are problems today. Why might that be the case? Dr. Engel mentioned this text, Bleeding Out by Thomas Abt. Who's a Harvard researcher. He talks about some places being sticky. Violence just tends to stick in places. It's so interesting, he talked a lot about how offenders and victims are often networked. Today's offenders becomes tomorrow's victim. Today's victim becomes tomorrow's offender. We know that those networks exist, but we had never, and I had never, as a place based scholar, thought about places as being networked. Just to give you a little bit of background about what I mean places being networked. If you think about a place network as an infrastructure that allows violence to take place, as fenders are engaged in all sorts of violence, so it's such really harming communities. We think of this infrastructure, it's larger than just what we see on a crime map.

For example, when we look at a crime map, we see the crime site, so where a particular crime occurred. But what we don't see are some of these other locations that are being used by the offenders in the communities. What's fascinating about this, and I'll come back to this in just a second, community members know where these are. They understand the dynamics, they understand what's going on and how people who intend to harm other people are using their communities. Some of these other locations are what we call convergence settings. These are public locations where offenders might congregate. We also have what we call comfort spaces and they're like convergence settings, except that they're private. They're controlled by offenders. If you're moving weapons, if you're moving drugs, if you're moving humans, in the case of human trafficking, comfort spaces become very important to that network of places. Then finally, we have something called a corrupting spot. A corrupting spot is a business, typically a legitimate business, but it's a business that's helping to facilitate crime in other places.

Imagine a place that selling or buying stolen goods, a place that might be laundering money associated with an illicit market. In Las Vegas, when we had the economic downturn and I see it happening again, copper theft is happening everywhere. Catalytic converters are being stolen. Copper is being stripped from light posts. In Las Vegas, we were able to tie that to two metal recycling centers that were driving this crime throughout the valley. This corrupting spot ends up contributing to this network of places. This is the underlying infrastructure that exists in those hotspots. Although we focus always on the crime sites because we see those on the crime maps, without systematic investigations, and as Dr. Engel said, with the community and the police working in tandem to identify these other locations and doing something about them, we leave this infrastructure intact. What happens is, and I'll just share this example with you, as we were developing out the strategy, this was the number one cause for service location in the City of Cincinnati. Dr. Engel's very familiar with this.

It had been a problem for years. As I'm explaining what this place infrastructure might look like to the captain who was tasked with coming up with a new strategy, she said, "Actually, I can draw this for you." Very quickly, I'm going to give you the CliffNotes version of what she knew about this place infrastructure. This particular apartment complex, the most violent location in the city, the most violent location in the Avondale neighborhood. Here's what we know. It's an apartment complex. It's fallen into a bit of disrepair, open air drug market to the south. This commander did everything science told her to do at the time. She works with a focus to turn strategy, to identify those trigger polars, and help to dismantle that game and eliminate sort of the threat of the most violent individuals in that neighborhood. She also worked with the place owners and the place managers to reconfigure the location and make it less conducive to crime.

Everything from lighting to fencing to redesigning the infrastructure of the location, as we do often when we have a high crime place. Sure enough, crime plummets, and she has no crime for about 30 days. About 90 days later, violence comes right back to that location. She said, "Why?" We started thinking about, what if there's this larger infrastructure that offenders retreat to in the community as police and the community are working on these issues? Then once we redeploy our attention and resources elsewhere, that violence comes right back to that location because there's this larger infrastructure in place. Just as an example, a couple of convergence settings. There's this community statue, sort of a community gathering area. I'll show you where this is on a map and why it's important that it was a convergence setting. Also, this local market receiving funds from the city to provide groceries to local neighborhood residents. But the joke was, the only groceries, fresh produce is painted on the side of that building.

They weren't doing what they needed to do as a local business, as a legitimate local business, but they were allowing the offenders to use their location. When you start to think about that, here's the market, here's the statue down here in the bottom left hand corner. You can see that mid to upper level drug dealers have a wonderful view of that open air drug market without actually having to be at that location. This is why it was key to the network. In terms of comfort spaces, most of the people in that apartment building were wonderful human beings who were trying to shelter in place. They didn't want that violence either. There were a couple of apartments that were kind of driving crime. One was actually a victim, and so police worked very closely with this victim to assist her. Her apartment was being broken into because her balcony had a view of this open air drug market. The other particular unit that was really driving some of the crime and had some problems there, was somebody who was affiliated with the gang that was operating in that particular jurisdiction.

Most people there, wonderful human beings trying to live their lives. There was a couple of places within that that were serving as comfort spaces. Then there were these nearby residential homes. It's so interesting. They tied it back to an owner, again, receiving money from the City of Cincinnati to rehab these houses, provide affordable housing to the community. Taking the money, doing very little to the houses, and actually renting to the people who were engaged in the market that was facilitating the violence. Now when you think about the infrastructure, it looks something like this. In terms of a corrupting spot, these little strip malls in the city of Las Vegas, where I'm from, we have tons of these. I know they're all over Cincinnati. They're in most urban jurisdictions. So interesting. Most of these businesses were not causing trouble at all. Even if they traditionally see these types of businesses where there's high crime, like a Family Dollar, the Family Dollar was not engaged in this.

But undercover investigations found some of these were buying stolen goods and selling stolen goods that facilitated these markets, and they were also engaged in money laundering. So this corrupting spot becomes part of that network. The contention was the captain said, "What if we did something about this entire place network? What if we brought all of the city resources together, identified this network and systematically remove the infrastructure so that if we make arrests, we don't leave the infrastructure in place for new offenders to just come in and use this community to engage in this type of violence?" This was the idea behind PNI. It was just a hypothesis. We didn't know if it would work, but here's the structure. First, we go through, we identify those locations. We identify those persistent hotspots that had been there for a really long time. Then we systematically investigate who are the chronic offenders. That's very interesting, but more importantly, because again, we don't want to just keep arresting, keep resting, how are those chronic offenders using these places? What does that place network look like?

Then, let's think beyond traditional criminal justice resources. Let's disrupt these networks through a coordinated city or county approach. Then let's really focus on monitoring these locations long-term because we have vulnerable populations there. Building resiliency among our residents, our victims, the businesses in that area. To do that, we adopted this entire approach that we call holistic governance. We put together this PNI board, and basically it was staffed with all departments the city had. Public safety is not just a police problem, it's a city problem. If we're going to effectively address this, we're going to take all of our resources that we possibly can and direct them into these vulnerable locations and prioritize city resources in these locations. These departments they're all accountable to the city mayor, city manager, who makes sure that everybody's showing up and that they're engaged in this process. What this does is, if we're doing this correctly, if we're implementing this strategy correctly, we're prioritizing the objectives of the residents. What do they need? What do they want? What is going on?

Their voices become central here. We create effective systems to reduce and remove these silos that every city department is operating within. We really think about ways to leverage what we have. Every city has limited resources, but those resources should go first and foremost to our most vulnerable locations. This was the idea, that basically police would do the investigations. They would spend all the time in the community identifying these place networks in partnership with the community. Again, as Dr. Engel knows, when we go out and we do these community surveys ahead of time, the community knows so much more than just your average beat officer. Even your beat officers know so much, but the community would say, "Yeah, they're using this place over here." Yes, you can build cases against defenders, but that's not the idea. The idea is to build cases against the people who are facilitating the violence in those neighborhoods. Those individuals often don't even live there, especially when we're talking about rental properties in some of these locations.

It's really important to start thinking about building, if you will, a case against a place. Like what's going on? Why is the violence happening there? Take that investigative product, and instead of simply focusing on arrest, take it to the PNI board and say, "What city resources do we have available to change the dynamics in these locations? This is how we know offenders are using our communities. How do we change the dynamics?" As you know, other city departments have lots of resources that the police do not have. Police have several tools in their toolbox, but they don't have the weight of the city behind them as they would if you brought this entire board together, use this holistic governance approach. There might be, and every urban city I know is dealing with this, lots of places that need to be demolished, let's say. Some of these abandoned buildings. Well, if it's in a PNI jurisdiction and it's contributing to the violence in the area, that gets prioritized.

That might be something where trafficking engineering prioritizes a project in a PNI area because that's a particular location that the offenders are using as part of their network. When we think about how is violence reduced, what are the long-term outcomes? We did these pilot projects. This is what got Dr. Engel and I so excited about what we could do with this. There were two pilot locations in the City of Cincinnati. Two very different neighborhoods. If you're familiar with Cincinnati, 52 different neighborhoods, East Westwood and Westwood close together, but so different in terms of their dynamics. We also chose a pilot location a few years later as part of an initial project that Dr. Engel led. Just outside of Nellis Air Force Base in the City of Cincinnati, that has been one of our most persistent, violent hotspots in that location. The question was, would we find place networks in these locations? Yes, we did. When the investigators shifted their focus from just chasing individuals who might be committing harm and started focusing on how they're using the infrastructure of the community to their advantage and how that facilitated violence, we found these locations.

This East Westwood site, a very, very violent location. The investigators went out, and wherever you see these red dots, these sort of what showed up on crime maps. These red parcels. Some of these other locations, we didn't know were problematic. The community knew, and some of the beat officers knew, but we didn't have the resources to do much about it. They started working on these schematics. What they're finding are things like, yes, this looks like a code violation, but this is also a location, although it hadn't come to the attention of the police, where offenders were storing community guns, ammunition in the grass. It would go undetected. They're utilizing that space for that purpose. They're utilizing some of these rental properties as sort of distribution centers. It's so interesting. This was a stretch of road that had lots of drive by shootings, tons. When we went door to door, knocked on doors and asked people, "What's going on along this stretch?" They said, "Those aren't our cars."

The residents said, "We don't park our cars there. Those are all the offenders and they parked their cars there because when there's a shooting, they use their cars as a barricade." It was really interesting to uncover the dynamics that's facilitating violence in these locations. Now Westwood, completely different community. Completely different configuration, but still with a place network. Just look different because every community has different dynamics. Here you have a market and a gas station, lots of drive by shootings going on. It's so interesting, when the officers went out and actually talked to people at these locations that they'd start identifying some of the offenders disappearing into maybe after a particular incident, they're also uncovering quality of life issues. Things like buildings that need to be addressed, or you have managers who aren't replacing major doors to facilities. What they're finding is, by engaging with the community, working on these quality of life issues, this is just a washing machine in the basement of one of these places with tons of intelligence written on it, in terms of who's feuding with who.

The community's reinforcing this by saying, "Yes, this is what's happening." It opens up all these avenues for police to better understand the dynamics that are occurring in these different areas. As you can see, this was that market that I showed you out here. When you have managers who don't control their space, you have a lot of unmanaged space. For those of you who work in these communities, we know how opportunistic violence can be. A lot of this is unmanaged space, poor place management, allowing people to interact in ways that then generates violence. We know once we have one violent incident, another violent incident is likely to occur in response to that, and another violent incident is likely to occur. If we can stop that chain from occurring, we might have a chance at getting a handle on this. When investigators bring these types of intelligence products to the board, it's all these other city departments that get involved. It's not the police, and it's not just about arrest. We have an unsecured dumpster where we have illegal dice games going on where the outcome often leads to a shooting.

The fire department comes in and secures that. Again, that unkept grass or these abandoned properties, quality of life issues as well, buildings and inspection steps up and eliminates those dynamics. When it came to the cars being parked, traffic and engineering with surveys from the community saying, "Yes, please do this." Changed the traffic flow and changed the parking restrictions, so offenders couldn't use the space that way anymore. City solicitor comes in and says, "Either you change your management practices or we're going to seize your business." It helps again to change some of these dynamics that are facilitating some of this violence. In terms of what happened in that first site, the East Westwood site, these are just gun violence scores that you've seen running on the side. With the white background, it's pre PNI, or PIVOT as it used to be called. Once it turned gray, this is when they started addressing that infrastructure. The rest of the city went down about 9% in violent crime.

In East Westwood, it went down just over 88% in gun violence, in that particular tiny micro-location. In terms of the second location, the rest of the city goes down about 8%. They go down about 71% in gun violence. Now, 71% is nothing to be upset about. If you get a 71% reduction in gun violence, you're doing really, really well. But as a researcher, Dr. Engel, and I would say, "Why did this site not achieve the almost 90% reduction?" What the investigators found when they continued to monitor the location and go back in, some of the infrastructure was still in place. Once they identified those additional locations, this site began to perform better than the initial site, which was really interesting. The analyst at the time put together this sort of, what they call a time to failure grasp. These are actual shootings. So bullets in bodies. As Dr. Engel said, these are real humans with I mean, real lives that are being impacted. About every 13 days, we had a bullet in a body.

When we started addressing that infrastructure, you could see, we go almost a year her. We go almost two years here without anybody being shot in that location. You can see the gun violence scores just start to plummet over time. Again, with that systematic removal of that infrastructure, partnering with the city to eliminate the opportunities for violence. In Las Vegas, they tried a slightly different approach. They didn't put together a full board. They really focused on, let's identify some of these places and these players. Let's use our own relationships with some of the department heads that we know and let's see what we can do. Within a year, they were able to drive down gun violence by about 40%. Didn't get quite the reduction that we saw before. They are now, as Dr. Engel pointed out, they are setting up a full county and city board because they have different jurisdictions, and they have six different sites that they're implementing this as part of this new initiative that we're doing. They're already seeing really, really promising results, which has been absolutely amazing. Here's what we've kind of learned from all this.

We can achieve sustainable crime reductions in these persistent, historic beyond 30 days. We can do something different. This is not a panacea. This is not meant to replace all the other good work, all of the other initiatives that are going on, especially at the community level. But the way I like to think about this is, this allows you to maximize the impact of those other initiatives. Because what's happening here, is we're not leaving that criminogenic infrastructure in place so that offenders can continue to use the community in the way that they had previously. This holistic governance approach is more effective, it's more efficient, and it's more ethical than simply sending police in time after time after time to address with traditional criminal justice responses that we know can harm the community and places officers at risk without addressing some of these underlying dynamics. This is really a new approach to public safety. When I think about police reform, I think about redefining the role of police.

If police are acting as ambassadors for the community, rather than just as people who come in and try to stabilize the community for a moment, when they're speaking on behalf of the community to other city departments, this really changes the dynamics between police and the community. It maximizes our impact of our local government resources. This is where we're at now. We're so excited to be able to talk with you all and to answer some questions. I'm going to kick this back to Director Moore if I can.

Karhlton Moore: All right. Thank you. That was wonderful to listen to. I've had the great opportunity to listen to the two of you talk about this. Tamara, you get so excited, you get me excited about this.

Tamara Herold: I'm sorry. I'm very passionate [crosstalk]-

Karhlton Moore: I hope everyone else is excited. We do have a number of questions that have been submitted. But actually the first question comes from, let's see, [Carlton] in Ohio. He wants to know, with the need for communities and law enforcement to work better together and to improve the overall relationship, can you explain how PNI aids in that effort and what exactly is the involvement of the community?

Tamara Herold: Absolutely. Robin, do you want me to start off and then-

Robin Engel: You go first.

Tamara Herold: Sure. One of the most important elements of the actual strategy is, there's a couple elements that are really critical. One is transparency. The community knows exactly what this is and exactly what police are trying to accomplish. Second, when we start to look at these communities differently, the first thing we do is we talk to the people in those communities about what their needs are, what they're seeing, what are the dynamics. It's not investigations in the traditional sense where we're simply investigating a crime or what happened here. But really asking about what are the community dynamics? What's happening here? The community voice is absolutely critical. What we found in all the jurisdictions, and Robin can talk about some of the community partnerships in Las Vegas ... She actually went out and visited the site, met with the people who were managing some of the locations out there. What we found, the faith-based community, businesses, residents were all engaged as part of the strategy. Were all a part of helping to design what they wanted their communities to look like.

If you can imagine police going in, listening to the community, watching and observing how offenders are using the community, bringing that back to the city to maximize the resources, but then also serving as ambassadors in terms of listening to what does the public want the community to look like? What kind of dynamics need to change? Because one of the most important things, we can take a negative space and through enforcement make it neutral, if you will. Remove offenders from that space. But if you leave that space neutral and we never do anything positive in it, it can go right back to negative. One of the main roles that the community played was being able to tell the city what they wanted to see. In the case of one of the violent hotspots for the PNI initiative in Cincinnati, there were children in the community, but also a lot of elderly residents.

The elderly residents said, "Yes, we need a playground for the children, but we would like a walking trail around that playground so that we can get out, we can exercise and we can activate that public space and also serve as eyes and ears." Because it's really hard for offenders to take over a space that not only children are using, but now you have your older residents walking the perimeter as part of their daily activities. That's part of the role. I think what we found both through interviews and just going out and talking to community members, how much they appreciated what the police were doing. I mean, often community members will appreciate when police come in, make the arrest of violent offenders and help to make the community safer. This takes it to a completely different level. Robin, I don't know if you want to talk at all, but I know you've seen all of these changes as well as part of the work you've been doing.

Robin Engel: Yeah. I'll just note, I learned my lesson about a decade ago. I was meeting with a community leader and the violence ... As a researcher, I'd take a look at it and I said, "Well, this was actually different than some of the other locations, because it's actually younger offenders here than in other areas in the city." We have a strategy we think will be good for this. Again, this is a decade ago. That community member looked me in the eyes and said, "Those are our children you're talking about." It was like, "Right, of course they are." Can you imagine if someone came into my community and said, "This is what we need to do with your kids." What I really love about the strategies, the upfront work is looking for the persistent hotspot locations. Identifying what those look like over time. But right from there, the very next step is, all right, let's talk to the community members and see what they're seeing, what they want. It was really, for me, a wake up call about a lot of the, in particular, police led strategies that are very well-intended.

The police departments aren't coming in and saying, "Well, we're going to harm communities." That's not the point, of course, but they inadvertently do sometimes. That's why I like this holistic approach and was really excited about the role that community can play as an equal partner in what's happening in their spaces.

Karhlton Moore: Okay. The next question, is there a possibility in those states where a test site is located for the CJ statistical analysis center to be involved in the project?

Robin Engel: Well, we love all partners. The more folks that we can get to the table that have analytical capabilities, that have means and resources, and can help as part of the larger work, absolutely. I think there's a role for exactly that type of thing. The other thing to note is, as Tamara mentioned, these communities that we go into, they're already doing something. There's no community out there right now that's not addressing violence in some way. Sometimes we come in and we say, well, "We're already doing this." It's like, okay, this is supplemental. This is an add on to what you're doing. Hopefully over time becomes, this is the way the community responds to violence. The more partners that we can get at the table to bring resources, to bring tools, to help with the analytical components, the better off we are.

Karhlton Moore: Okay. This is exciting, but sounds familiar with comprehensive communities, Reno and Project Safe Neighborhoods, Bush. What is the difference? More importantly, what are the barriers to implementing the strategy? PNI makes sense, but what is preventing us from adopting the strategy in cities throughout the United States?

Tamara Herold: Can I [crosstalk]-

Robin Engel: Well [inaudible].

Tamara Herold: I'm sorry. Say apologies.

Robin Engel: Apologies. Go ahead, Tamara.

Tamara Herold: From my perspective, I think when we talk about reimagining public safety, it's not just about police. Police play a really important role in every single community, but it's not the police that should be driving public safety. It really is at the city level, or the county level, whatever that jurisdiction is. If the coordination doesn't come from that level, and we're just talking about police and communities, and we're not using this holistic governance approach of bringing everybody together, that's the number one, I would say barrier. In two ways. One, if we're not doing it, we can't accomplish the work that we're talking about. Two, getting the buy-in. It's really interesting. Very early on, there were a lot of city departments that if we didn't have, as the project champion, the city manager saying, "You will be engaged in this, and you will be held accountable for the violent outcomes in these communities." These other city department heads didn't want anything to do with it. They said, "That's not us. Public safety, that's police. That's not us."

Shifting the mindset that this is a city problem, or whatever jurisdiction it is, that, that is the issue and police just play one role. Really thinking about the role that we want police to play, until we get those conversations going and really start coordinating at that level, I don't think that we'd get the same. Robin, you can speak to this because of the Project Safe Neighborhoods. All the work that you've done across the country, a lot of those are so local and not coordinated at the very, very top. Would you agree? [crosstalk]-

Robin Engel: Yeah.

Tamara Herold: ... please.

Robin Engel: Well, and so the PSN strategies were very successful and have a very good track record. But a lot of those communities were not able to sustain the reductions in violence. I'll take you all the way back to one of those federal initiatives. Remember, Weed and Seed?

Tamara Herold: Right.

Robin Engel: Well, what it turns out, when you do Weed and Seed, you do you do a lot of weeding, you don't do much seeding. It always works out that way because traditionally law enforcement reverts back to what they know. They know traditional responses, they know about investigations for individual offenders, they know about making cases. When we have strategies that don't have communities as equal partners, a lot of times they'll show initial effectiveness. Community often sort of drops out and then it becomes much more law enforcement centered or focused. Oftentimes, the cops are the ones left holding the bag, if you will. Because none of the other city departments, as you mentioned, want to come to the table or see it as their role. We really do need to redefine public safety as much more holistic that is beyond police. I think that's what we have to change the mindset and the culture. There are a couple of communities that are willing to step up to do that, to pilot test it.

One of the things that I forgot to mention earlier was, that these communities, they have to sign MOU agreements with us before we'll bring in our technical assistance and training and take them on as a site. They have to have political leaders that are committed to this, and they have to establish that board. We're at that stage right now with these jurisdictions, of pulling who are the members of that board, and who's going to help to sustain this over time?

Tamara Herold: Such a great question.

Robin Engel: Yeah.

Karhlton Moore: Okay. We have a couple about ... This next group of questions are all about any harm caused by or displacement as a result of the strategy. The first question, did the application of the PNI approach result in additional litigation between local or county government and property owners/business operators? Example, property owners, fighting condemnation orders, or business owners suing over denial of business licenses or other related actions.

Robin Engel: Tamara, you can take that one and then also remember about the displacement is another question coming in.

Tamara Herold: All right. Fair enough. Then Robin, please piggyback off that. Most of the time, most managers and owners, even those who are resistant in the beginning, once things brought to their attention and there's threat of litigation, begin to change. I do think when they can see the harm that's occurring in the community ... They might not even put those things together. Some do, but some don't. It's much more effective to bring individuals to the table and try to work together. It's just not about shutting down businesses because as we know, there might be one local grocery store in a community. You shut that grocery store down and now this creates even bigger problems for the community. We have to be very, very careful about how we use litigation and why we're using the litigation. The ultimate purpose is to ensure that places are managed properly and that we're creating safe spaces for people. In terms of generating additional litigation, I can tell you that that happened at one particular location where they had to use litigation. They had to take the owners to court because they just simply would not comply.

Yes. But imagine that at the end of the chain. What we want is to facilitate compliance and an understanding and help these people be great businesses in the community. That's just at the very end if you're going to continue to persist and not help the community and continue to hurt them. In terms of displacement, that is the best question ever. As a crime scientist, we sort of thinking about crime as a balloon. You squeeze the balloon in the middle and then it pops out on both sides. So we expect displacement to happen. Displacement can happen and it does happen in certain instances. I have found in my research time after time, again, if you just address one crime site, the likelihood of displacement is much greater than if you're again, looking at an entire network of locations that might be facilitating the violence. Once you start looking at it from that network perspective, and that's why we call it PNI ... We want to think about it as a network of these places, and you're systematically eliminating that.

What happens is, the displacement becomes much less likely. In fact, when we started the initial pilot projects, I sat down with the police officers and community members and we said, "When we block the opportunity here, when we change the dynamics here, where will the offenders go?" They said, "Right down the road." They could name the apartment complex and they said, "They're going to go there because there's things happening there too." We closely monitored that location for displacement. That's one thing that you always want to do as part of this initiative. If you're intervening, where might crime displace and to be very cognizant of that. We found, instead of displacement, a diffusion of benefits. I think most traditional academics, not Dr. Engel, not myself, would have a lot of trouble explaining that. Why would you find that crime goes down in a place that you'd expect it to go up if you're changing a nearby community?

I think the answer, but again, this is part of the excitement of really evaluating this across the country, I think the answer is that when you address it holistically and you're hitting an entire infrastructure, that location that's nearby also becomes less attractive to offenders. Again, remembering that so much violence is opportunistic. When you're starting to manage more spaces, it just makes violence overall in the community, less likely to occur. I don't know, Robin, if you want to add to that, but-

Robin Engel: No, I thought you answered that beautifully.

Tamara Herold: Excellent. Thank you.

Robin Engel: Well, and Tamara knows this, I'm such a stickler for testing, testing, testing, what is the evidence? We have to build the evidence base? We built that in to this. Arnold Ventures typically doesn't fund training technical systems insights based on the research. But what we explained to them is, we need to get it right, have these communities have the technical assistance and training that they need to really have a strong test of whether or not this particular initiative is effective. That's the front end. Then we'll come back to you in the next year or so, and let you know what we found out. But the pilot tests are all very, very positive.

Karhlton Moore: Okay. I think we have time for one more question. But before I ask it, we're going to open a short poll. Please let us know what you thought about today's webinar. I'm going to combine kind of the last two questions because they really get at the issue of quality of life impact for people in the targeted community. How does PNI control for, or address displacement about housing and removal of integral resources like grocery stores and businesses that are already lacking in these areas and contribute to crime rates? How has PNI built or not built to address the underlying causes of offending in those areas and how to diminish those factors so that offenders don't feel compelled to commit crimes in the first place? They identify they're coming from Ohio in Dayton, but now live in North Carolina. Dayton's hotspots correlate directly with areas of redlining, lack of resources, hospitals, grocery stores, underfunded schools, Black and Brown citizens being overpoliced without addressing these other things that actually make decreased crime sustainable.

Tamara Herold: It's such a great question. As I mentioned before, this strategy is not a panacea. It has to be in tandem with lots of other initiatives going on at the local level, at the city level, at the state level. What I will say is, again, when police are serving as ambassadors and not just enforcers, and police are listening to the community, and they're saying, "Yeah, this place is ..." Like I mentioned that grocery store, "this place is problematic, but it's the only place I can buy milk in my neighborhood. It's very critical to us." This is why bringing that type of intelligence, that's the kind of investigative work we want to see on the part of police. Bringing that back to the city board to say, what are our options? When you have the director of economic development sitting at the table going, "That's a really interesting question. We're going to address this in a way to ensure that people still have access to food in this location." That's where you start to be able to do this.

Do I think that somehow PNI is going to solve all community problems? There is no way. But it does really change the dynamics and the quality of life issues. The best example I can give ... Actually, I'll let Robin ... If you want to talk about the Vegas, we're doing community interviews and surveys at that apartment, one of the most violent apartment complex, is a condo complex just outside of Nellis Air Force Base. We asked people, "What is your primary concern before and then after the PNI strategy?" Robin, did you want to take it or [crosstalk]-

Robin Engel: No, I'm sorry. You go ahead.

Tamara Herold: All right. Good. She loves me so much. Let me do the punchline. We do this survey and initially people said, "Gun violence, gun violence, gun violence." In this particular location. When we were done though, we weren't finished, because now they were concerned about other quality of life issues. Interestingly, one of the common responses was, somebody's parking in my parking space. When we went from gun violence being the number one issue, to somebody is parking in my parking space, we thought, "My God, we're getting a handle on this. This is really good. We are changing the dynamics in a really positive way." But it's not to say that there aren't a lot of quality of life issues that we need to be concerned with. I think PNI at least gives the community one more year, one more outlet to express their concerns and gets to people who control the resources to then assist them if that helps.

Robin Engel: I'll just, as a final word, no one's going to invest in these communities when they're shooting at each other. When there's that much violence in the street, it's hard to come in and be able to just invest. What PNI does, is it gives that opportunity to really take that violence level down, and now all other possibilities around the table for these communities in need. It's just that one. If we don't follow through with the next steps, then shame on us because then we don't have the sustained reduction that we actually need for these communities that are at high risk.

Karhlton Moore: Thank you. Thank you very much. Well, I want to thank you for joining us this afternoon. Thank you again to both of our speakers. That was wonderful to listen to. We hope to see you for our next webinar on June 29th on rapid DNA. Registration is available on the NCJA website. Thank you everyone.

Tamara Herold: Thank you, director.

Robin Engel: Thank you.

(silence)