

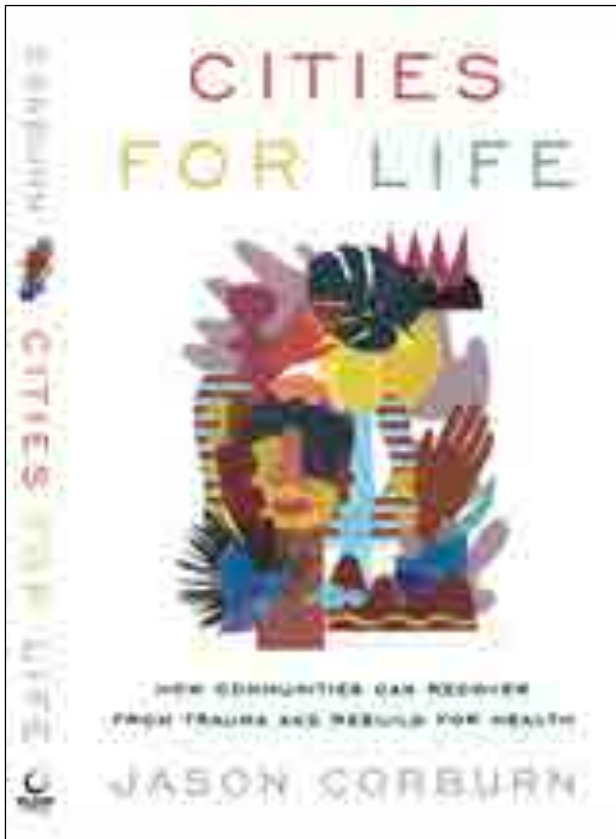
# From Community Health to Healing: Participatory approaches for reducing violence & trauma

Prof. Jason Corburn  
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# Towards Healing & Community Health Equity...

- Stop thinking 'health' is treating people and sending them back into living and working conditions making them sick in first place.
- Violence, gun violence, is a significant driver of health inequities, especially racial/ethnic disparities
- Places matter for health & well-being – not just built environments but how people create & animate space
- Community members are experts too, and we must do better to value & centre them in decision-making

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## Richmond, California – San Francisco Bay Area



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# Richmond, CA:

## From Toxic Town to Healthier, Peaceful Place?

- Majority community of color: African-American, Latino, Vietnamese & Laotian
- History of migration, industrialization & activism
- 2007 – 9<sup>th</sup> most violent in US (mostly gun violence)
- Lowest life expectancy in Bay Area in 2005
- Commercial determinants: pollution, workplace exploitation, dumping, lack of affordable housing (mkt rate) = **structural violence & toxic stress.**
- **How can city practices & partnerships support healing from traumas & promote well-being?**

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# Urban Epidemic: Community gun violence

- Fear of violence forces people to avoid public life; Almost nothing works in a city if public space is unsafe.
- Gun violence is a KEY Public HEALTH issue – it kills, but also anxiety & fear - poor sleep, hypertension = **TOXIC STRESS**
- Social connections and supports – the building blocks of health – break down (don't know or fear neighbors, no 'eyes of the streets,' etc.)
- Policing, incarceration & militarized responses are racist, left a legacy of dehumanization & rarely include needed community investments.
- **Firearm industry - commercial determinant of health** (like tobacco, oil, alcohol, sugar, etc., industries)

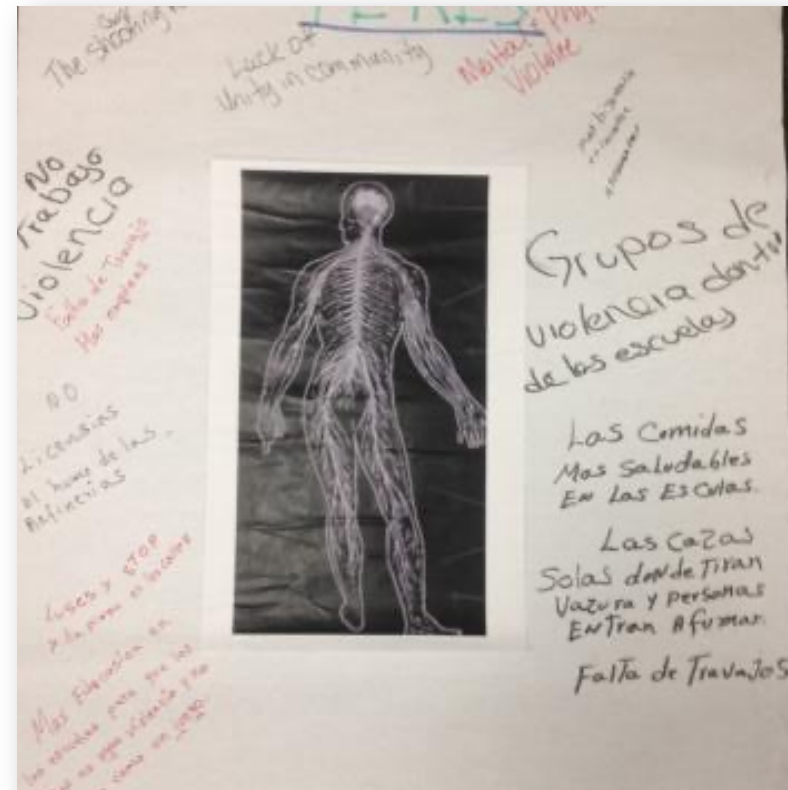


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# Community-led agenda: Toxic Stressors



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# Neurourbanism:

## Trauma-conscious planning, policy & practice

- Changing our living conditions, opportunity structures & social connections with the aim of **healing from trauma**.
- Understanding the effects of urban living and environments on neurological processes.
- “An interdisciplinary . . . approach that connects public mental health to urban planning to create better environments that will improve the mental wellbeing of individuals and communities in cities, and strengthen the resilience of high-risk individuals and children.”
- **Neuroplasticity= We can positively re-wire our brains and reverse the impacts of trauma through positive social supports & enriching, safe environments (in home & community) = physical spaces.**

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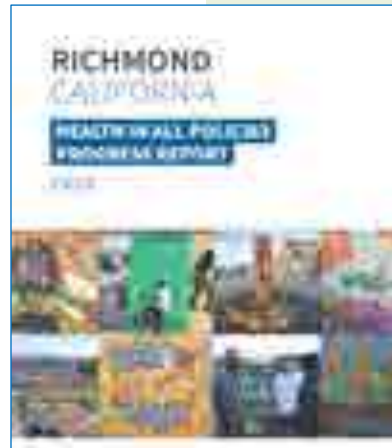


# Twenty Years of Healing Policies

Community Health & Wellness Element in General Plan (2005-ongoing)

Richmond Health Equity Partnership (2011-2014 )

Health in All Policies Strategy & Ordinance (2014-ongoing)



Richmond Rising Resilience Strategy (2019-



First US municipality to legislate *Health Equity in All Policies*

<https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/2575/Health-in-All-Policies>

<https://richmondrisingca.org/>

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## Peacemaking in City Gov't: Office of Neighborhood Safety



<https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/271/Office-of-Neighborhood-Safety>

**Formerly incarcerated community members. Return with healing-centered, mentorship skills.**

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## Peacemaker Fellowship: healing-centered supports

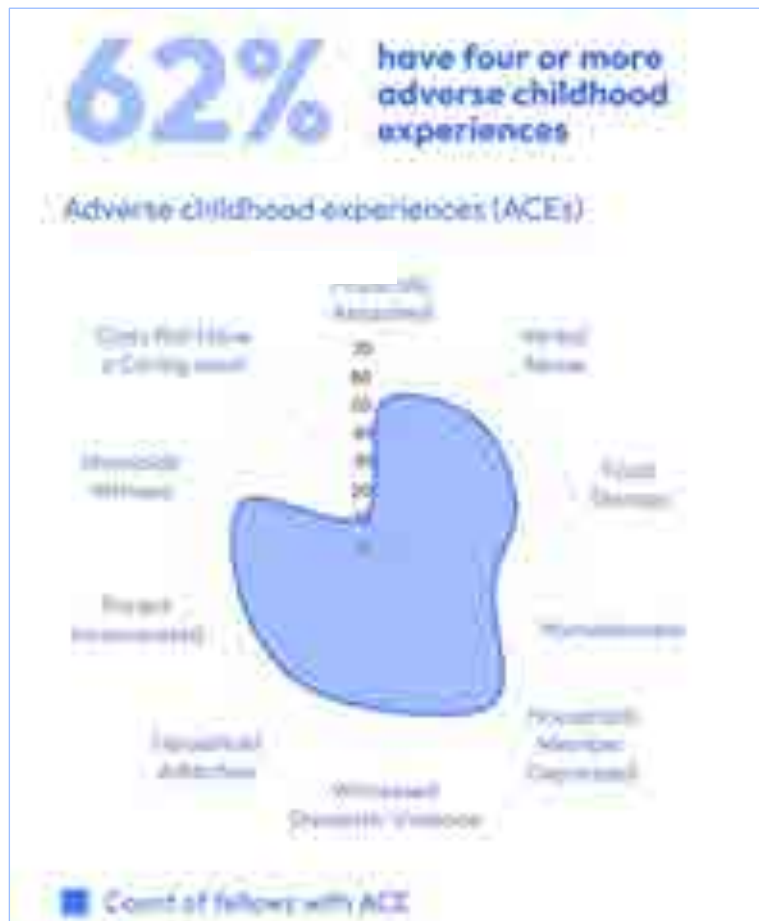
- 1) One-on-one & group mentorship  
– **Neighborhood Change Agent**  
(NCA)[credible messenger]
- 2) Life Management Action Plan  
(LifeMAP)
- 3) Group circles/life skills classes
- 4) Travel with rivals
- 5) Internships
- 6) Milestone allowance
- 7) Community violence interruption.  
= **street & social media**



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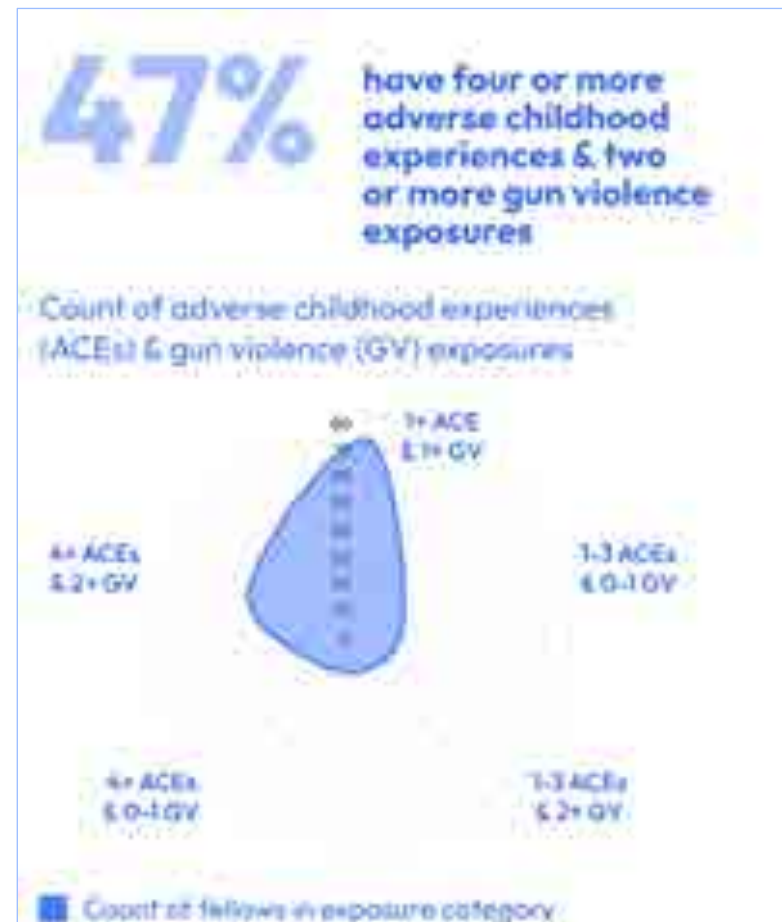
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# Participants or 'fellows' in ONS, Peacemaker Fellowship



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## Insults on Social Media

- 'Community' health not paying enough attention to social media
- Depression, stress and disconnection –recognized mental health impacts.
- 'Graffiti' used to communicate messages – now social media – “metastasizing disrespect”
- Internet 'banging'
- Trauma limits young people's ability to interpret insults, manage emotions, and contributes to revenge seeking behaviours.



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95% Alive; 97% no new gun injuries; 82% not arrested

## Positive Influences of the Program

Better anger  
management  
skills



69%

Feel safer in  
community



71%

Not using guns



82%

Have trusted  
adult in life



84%

Improved  
mental health



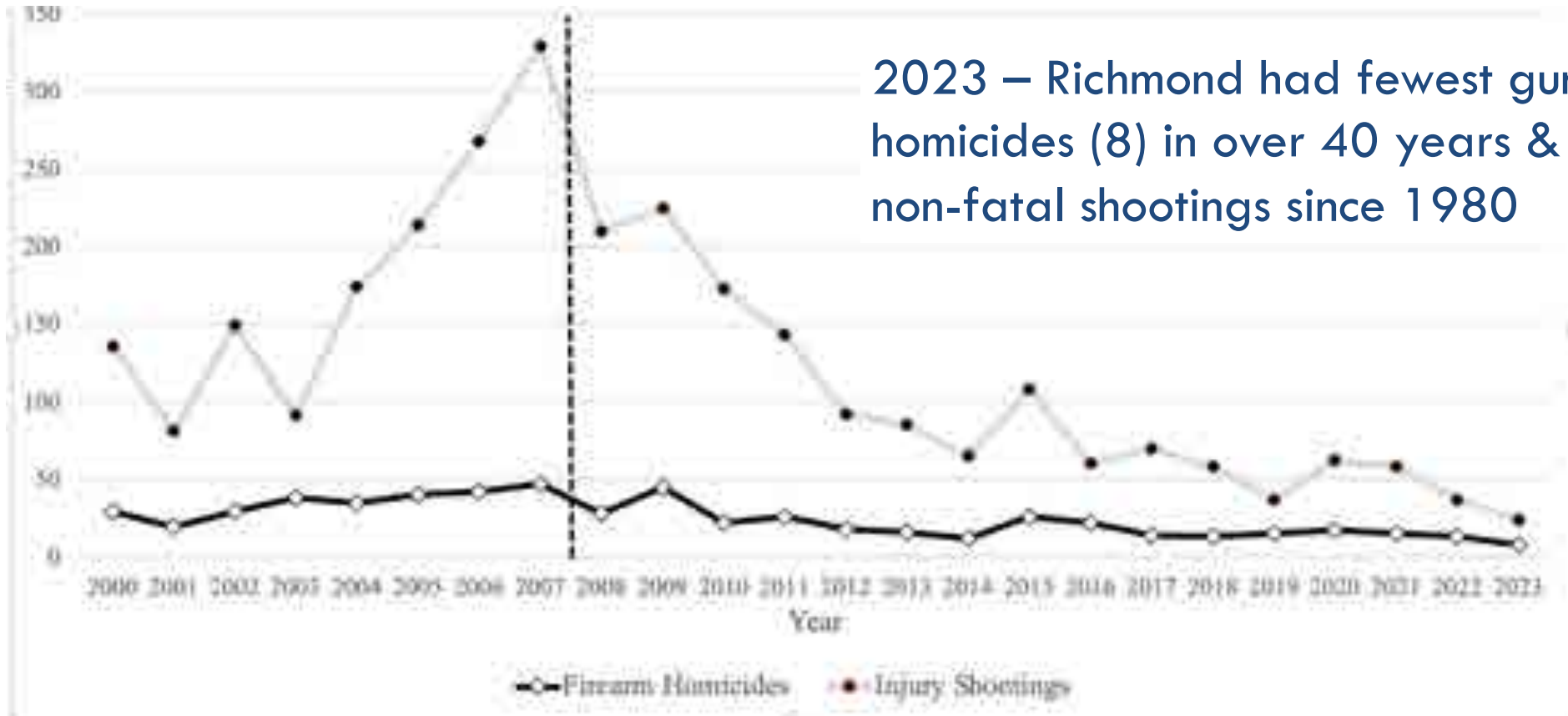
73%

Employed/new  
job skills



52%

## Richmond, CA: Firearm Homicides & non-fatal (injury) shootings, 2000-2023



# Advance Peace

Advancepeace.org



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# Richmond: Peacekeeping & Place (re)building



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# Pop-Up Park: Community designed & built



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POGO PARK

# ELM PLAYLOT

## Community Vision



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## Rebuilding our community

- \$1.65M in wages back into the community since 2010
- 200 people w/new job skills
- 12 – full time w/benefits
- Feeding 20,000 kids
- New home ownership



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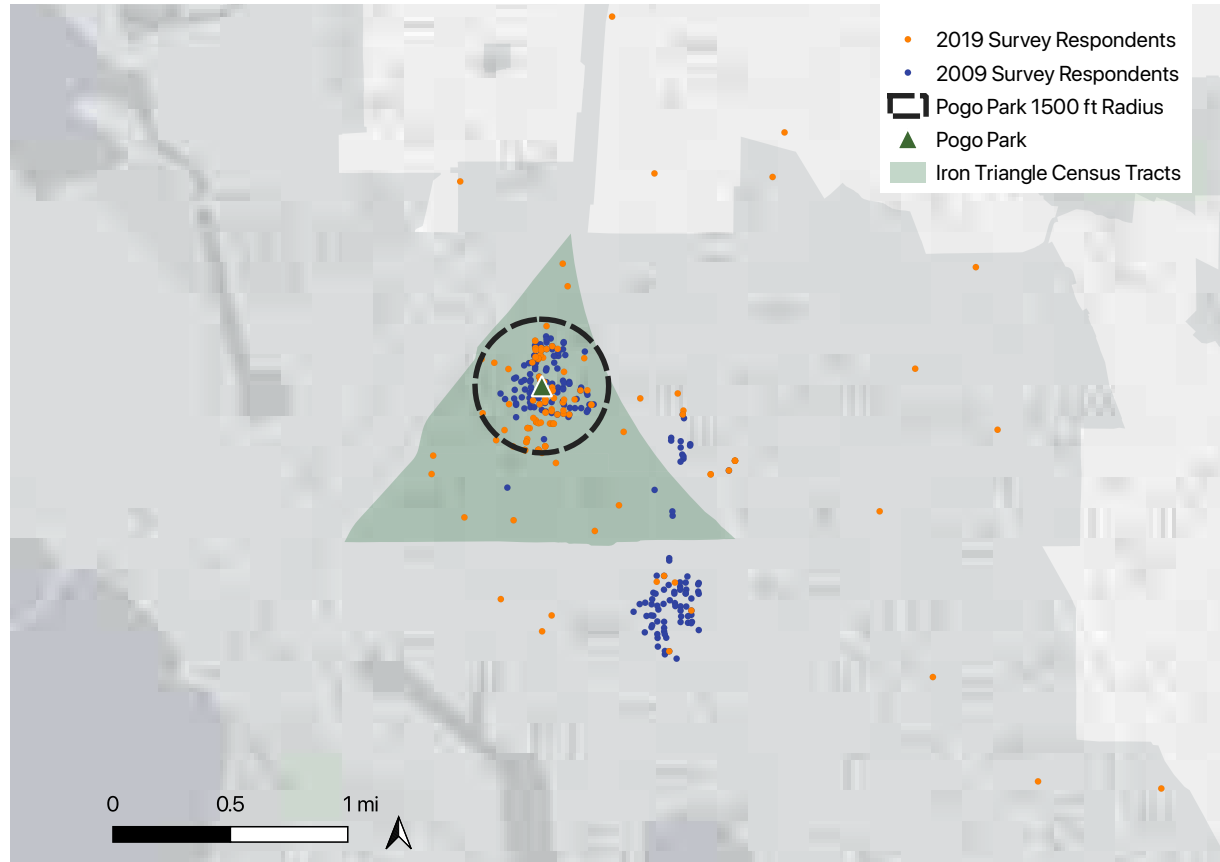


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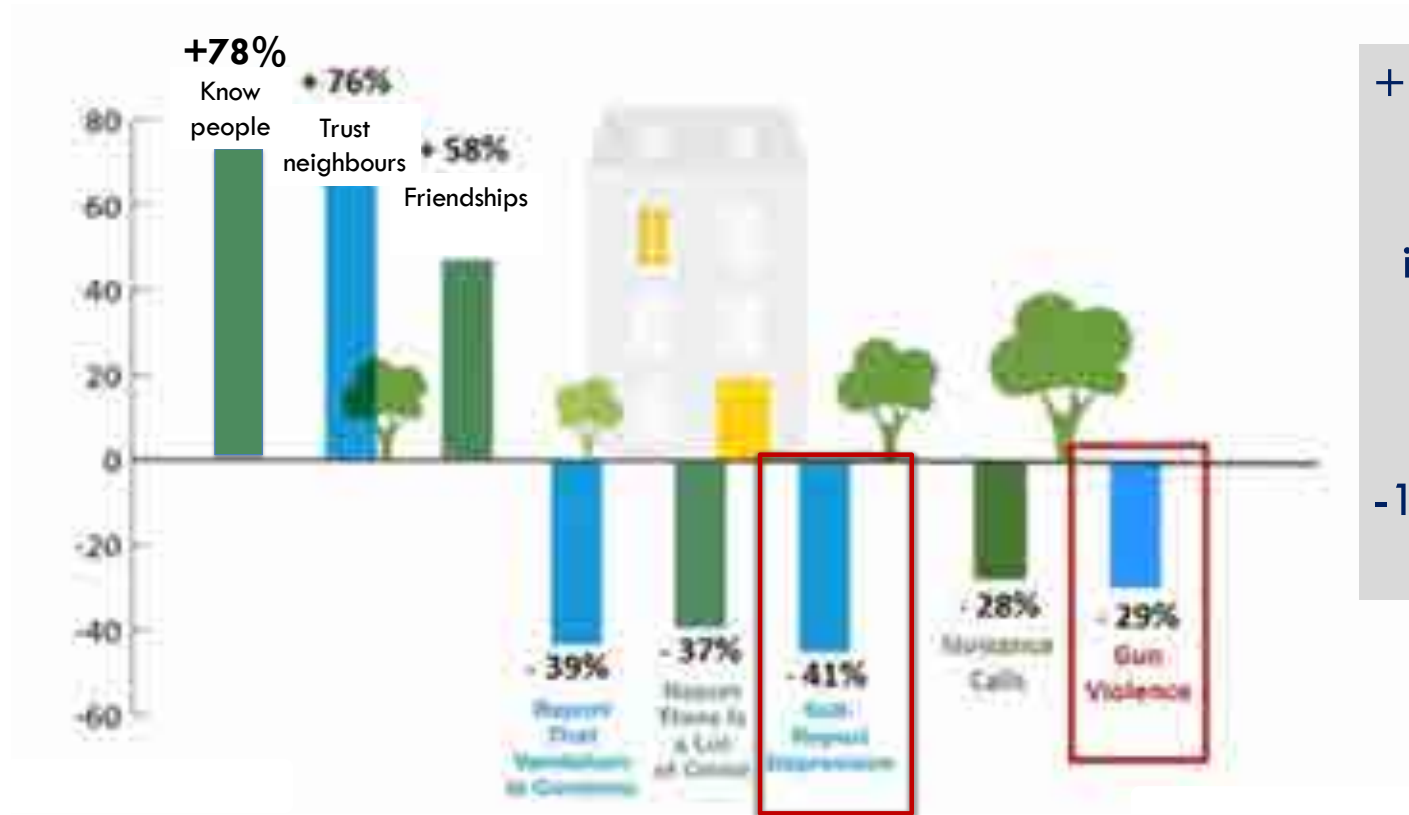
# Community Survey: 2009 & 2019



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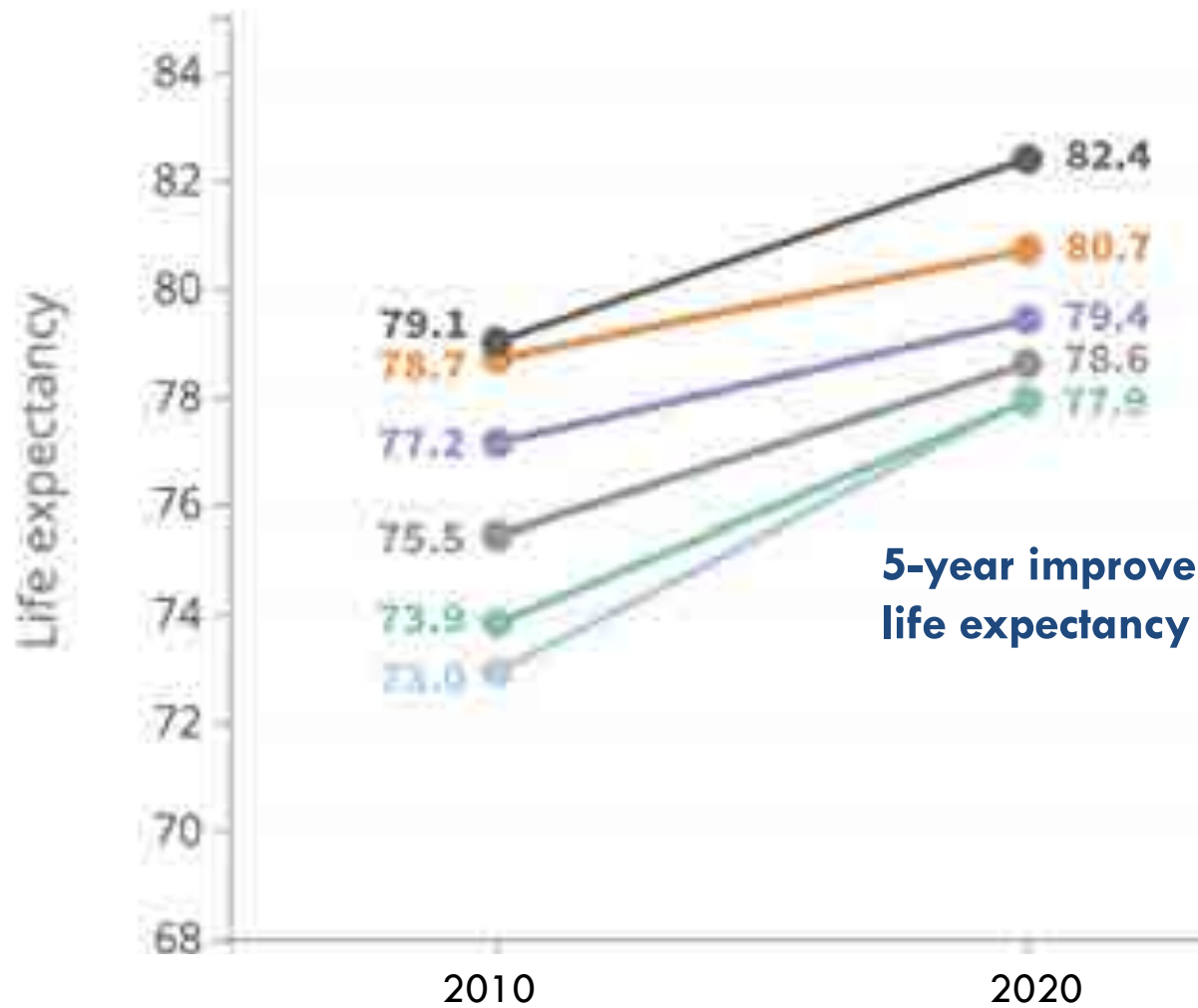
# Pogo Park helped reconnect neighbors, build trust & strong social bonds – all essential ingredients for *healthy neuroplasticity*



+\$15,000 USD increase in household income in 10 yrs.

-12% reduction in poverty

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Iron Triangle  
community

**5-year improvement in overall  
life expectancy in a decade**

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# Toward Cities for Life: With, not for, communities

- Center community knowledge & culture – don't romanticize – but deliver tangible, life-affirming supports.
- Ask – “what helps makes this place & people healthy & happy” not “what diseases need to be addressed.”
- Social connections – still the foundation of healing & health
- Ending violence key to community health; co-create solutions with those most impacted.
- **Neurourbanism** – investing in the people & places to promote both individual & community healing.



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