

# IMPACTS OF A TEMPORARY URBAN POP-UP PARK ON INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

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Deborah Salvo, PhD

Assistant Professor of Epidemiology

UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin



# Acknowledgements

## Investigators

- Abby C. King, PhD (Principal Investigator)
  - Jorge A. Banda, PhD
  - Jylana L. Sheats, PhD
  - Sandra J. Winter, PhD
- Daniela Lopes dos Santos

## Interns

- Martell Hesketh
- Nkeiruka Umeh
- Inbar Raber

## Participants and Partners

- Participants (State St. Green visitors & downtown Los Altos businesses)
  - Marcia Somers, Los Altos, CA City Manager
  - Brook Ray Smith, Passerelle Investments

# Outline

1. Background & gaps in the literature
2. City of Los Altos: the transformation of State Street
3. Study aims
4. Methods
5. Results
6. Impact of our study
7. Conclusions



# Background

- **Physical activity** has many health benefits: it is associated with better heart health, and lower risk of: diabetes, breast & colon cancer, dementia, and all-cause mortality.
- **Modifying the physical features of neighborhoods** to provide residents with equitable and convenient access to spaces for physical activity is a **promising strategy** for promoting physical activity.
- Public **urban recreation spaces** (e.g., parks) play an important role in promoting **health** and are potentially an important neighborhood element for **optimizing social capital and liveability** in cities.

# Background

- Park availability is associated with:
  - *Leisure-time physical activity*
  - *Quality of life*
  - *Community engagement*
  - *Social interaction*
- Competing land-use interests
- Natural experiments → research priority to establish causal relationship

# Gaps in the Literature

1. Pop-up parks have not been studied
2. Does the creation of parks in urban spaces (e.g. streets) affect businesses?
3. Do residents and businesses support the creation of parks in urban spaces?
4. Does increasing park availability in urban areas have effects on individual and community outcomes?

# Los Altos, CA

- Small-sized city on the San Francisco Peninsula
  - Population: 28,976



Growth



Construction



Street  
Closures

# State Street

- During the summer of 2013, a block of State Street was closed due to construction





# State Street

- A local investment group partnered with the city of Los Altos to create a **pop-up park** in the street-block closed due to construction



# Pop-up parks and tactical urbanism

- **Tactical Urbanism**
  - Shows a glimpse of how an urban public space could be with small modifications
  - Focus on *liveability*, beautification, recovery of public spaces for the people
- **Pop-up parks** are public recreation spaces resulting from transforming an underutilized area of the city into a temporary park
  - Usually implemented in areas restricted for cars, like parking spaces, parking lots, or roads
  - Usually small (single parking space to a couple of street blocks)
  - Great example of the potential dual use of public space

# State Street Green: Structured activities, equipment and infrastructure



**Equipped with:** astro-turf; lawn chairs, tables and umbrellas; large lamps; chalkboards; play equipment; skate-park; supervised activities; structured events (park area=4930 m<sup>2</sup> )

# Study aims

- 1) Quantify overall and active **park use** for State Street Green pop-up park
- 2) Obtain information on **user's perception** about the park
  - Why do people use the park?
- 3) Investigate if park presence affects (positively or negatively) **local businesses**
- 4) Evaluate if park-presence led to **changes in time-allocation patterns** among users

# **Aim 1: Quantify park use for State Street Green pop-up park**

- **Method:** Direct Observation
- **System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC)**
  - 14 times per day (hourly from 7AM to 8PM)
  - 4 randomly selected days (2 weekdays, 1 Saturday, 1 Sunday)
- **Park segments observed:**
  - Green space
  - Skate park



# Aim 1: Results

Park Segment	Age group	%
<b>Green Space</b> (n=1,716)	Children	40
	Teens	4
	Adults	49
	Older Adults	7
<b>Skate Park</b> (n=54)	Children	54
	Teens	35
	Adults	11



- 21% of green space users engaged in MVPA
- 36% of skate-park users engaged in MVPA

# **Aim 2: Obtain information on user's perception about the park**

- **Method:** User surveys (n=147)
  - Response rate=98.5%
- Surveys administered
  - 7 AM to 8 PM on 2 weekdays & 2 weekends
- **Information obtained included:**
  - Demographics
  - Time of day
  - Reason & duration of park-use
  - Park support
  - Alternate activities

# Aim 2: Results

Reason for park use	% (n=147)
Eat/drink at local business	33
Socialize	17
Active leisure (e.g. play)	15
Sedentary leisure (e.g. read)	14
Spend time outside	6
Attend organized events	5
Curiosity	3
Work	2






# **Aim 3: Investigate if park presence affects local businesses**

## **Methods:**

- Business **surveys** (n=95); Response Rate=100%
  - Changes on sales
  - Changes on foot traffic
- Walking distance to park (**GIS**: pedestrian-enhanced street network)
- **Regression models** → association between distance to park and change in sales & foot traffic

## Aim 3: Results

CHANGES IN SALES	% (n=147)
	26
	10
	61
No response	4

- No significant association between distance from business to the pop-up park and sales or foot-traffic ( $p > 0.25$ )

# Aim 4: Evaluate if park-presence has led to changes in time-allocation patterns among users

## ➤ User survey data

- What would you be doing if the pop-up park were not here?
- How much time will you spend (in total) at the pop-up park today?
- How often do you visit the pop-up park?

## ➤ Alternate activities (binary):

- **Screen-time** vs. non screen-time
- **Park-time** vs. time elsewhere
- **Downtown-time** vs. time elsewhere
- **Outdoor-time** vs. time indoors

## ➤ Multivariate logistic regression models estimating effect of park presence on spending at least 30 mins per week on each alternate activity.

- Adjusted for sex, age, race-ethnicity

# Aim 4: Results

If pop-up park weren't there, at time of survey...

- 65% would **not be spending time outdoors**
- 34% would be **in front of a screen**
- 59% would **not be in downtown Los Altos**
- 16% would be **at a park**

# Aim 4: Results

Outcomes	Odds Ratio	95 % C.I.
<b>Spending 30+ mins/wk outdoors</b> <i>(ref: indoor time)</i>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>(1.5, 2.8)</b>
<b>Spending 30+ mins/wk downtown Los Altos</b> <i>(ref: time spent elsewhere)</i>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>(1.2, 2.0)</b>
<b>Spending 30+ mins/wk at a park</b> <i>(ref: time spent elsewhere)</i>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>(1.2, 2.0)</b>
<b>Spending 30+ mins/wk in front of a screen while sitting</b> <i>(ref: time spent elsewhere)</i>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>(0.1, 0.5)</b>

# Impact

- Our evaluation of the pop-up park of downtown Los Altos generated interest from the **City of Los Altos management**, as well as **private investment** groups
- **January 2014**: Meeting with Los Altos City Manager and staff
- **January 2014**: Meeting with Community Development Director of Passarelle Investments
- **March 25, 2014**: Presentation of our results at the next Los Altos City Council Meeting

# Conclusions

- Our study provides valuable evidence supporting the **creation of parks and open spaces** in urban areas
- This pop-up park can serve as a **model for communities facing similar circumstances** related to road-closures or lack public recreation spaces
- The presence of public recreation spaces in urban areas may have benefits beyond health behaviors → **revitalization of downtown shopping districts**
- These potential benefits should be further explored, as they are **more likely to influence the decisions of stakeholders** for the creation of parks than health-related benefits
- Pop-up parks **challenge the notion that urban spaces are permanent in nature**

# Thank you!

“Love this! A whole block in downtown Los Altos closed off to traffic for the summer, and covered over with fake grass and super cool furniture. There are frequent family-friendly events and it's the perfect way to enjoy the warm weather.”

***Yelp review***

