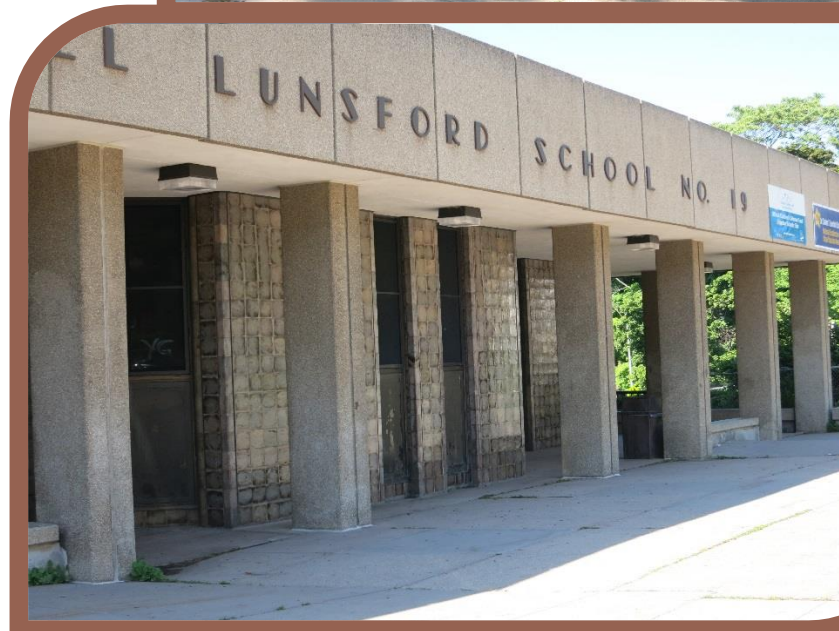




Improving Walkability around Rochester's Schools



Healthi Kids Report
August 2015



HEALTHI KIDS REPORT AUGUST 2015

Acknowledgements

Healthi Kids walkability report is made possible through collaboration and funding from the Greater Rochester Health Foundation (Health Foundation) and the New York State Department of Health Creating Healthy Places to Live Work and Play Program.

Healthi Kids collaborated with the Health Foundation to select schools for our walkability assessment in the Southwest Quadrant. The schools highlighted in our report have received funding from the Health Foundation's urban schools healthy weight initiative. Since 2013, nine city schools have received funding to increase physical activity and healthy eating opportunities. The Health Foundation has worked with these schools to promote walkability and safe routes to school programs.



Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Why is Walkability around Schools Important?.....	3
Evaluating Walkability in Rochester’s Southwest Neighborhoods.	4
Stage 1: Administering the assessment tool	
Stage 2: Administering the dot survey on potential recommendations	
Stage 3: Gathering parent & student feedback on recommendations	
Walkability Results.	6
Recommendations.	8
Endnotes.	10
Appendix 1: Healthi Kids Walkability Survey.	11
Appendix 2: Parent Engagement.	13
A) School #10 Bike Rodeo	
B) Hustle 2 Health – Flint St. R-Center	
C) Arnett Branch Library Events	
Appendix 3: Walkability Results.	16
Appendix 4: Locations of Recommendations & Photographs of Evidence.	19
A) Crosswalk restriping	
B) Updating Faded or Broken Signage	
C) Repairing Uneven Sidewalks	
D) Map of Recommendations	
Appendix 5: Reconsidering Traditional Crosswalks.	25
Appendix 6: Lessons Learned.	26

Executive Summary

Physical activity is an important component for children in our community to reach a healthy weight. Studies demonstrate that walking 1 mile to and from school each day means a child will get two-thirds of their daily-recommended physical activity.¹

Ultimately, in order to promote walking to school, the environment surrounding a school matters. Factors such as crime, traffic, and the physical infrastructure of surrounding roads, sidewalks, and homes can either contribute to or hinder parents' feelings of safety and whether they will allow their kids to walk to school or not. Walkability measures the extent to which the built environment is pedestrian friendly.²

In 2014-2015, Healthi Kids collaborated with parents and community members at three Rochester City School District elementary schools in the Southwest Quadrant (Schools #2, #10 and #19) to assess the environment, physical conditions and perceptions on how safe it is for kids to walk to school. Evaluation occurred in three stages: an initial walkability assessment and data collection, a dot survey of potential recommendations, and additional parent feedback through mapping and informal interviews at various community events and monthly parent coffee hours at each school.

Parents and community members indicate that the **top barriers to walkability** in the neighborhood include: *a lack of crosswalks, uneven sidewalks, scary buildings, traffic, cars traveling too fast, and not enough crossing guards.*

After assessing the perceived barriers to walkability, parents and community members informed Healthi Kids of recommendation they felt would solve issues of walkability in their neighborhood. They wanted to see more crossing guards, secured vacant housing, repaired sidewalks, restriped crosswalks, updated signage around schools, and cars to slow down on the streets around schools. Together, Healthi Kids and parents/community members from Schools #2, #10, and #19 recommend the following improvements to the walking environment for the 2015-2016 school year.

To improve walkability in Rochester's Southwest Quadrant, Healthi Kids recommends the School Traffic Safety Committee, the City of Rochester and Monroe County implement the following improvements for the 2015-2016 school year:

1. Restriping eight faded crosswalks and piloting a colorful crosswalk project around schools #2, #10, and #19 to promote traffic calming and notify motorists of pedestrian crossings;
2. Installing speed trailers on major streets near schools to alert motorists to their speed; or installing speed tubes on major streets to allow the City of Rochester to gather traffic data;
3. Updating faded street signage around schools to improve visibility for kids walking to school;



4. **Repairing uneven sidewalks in school zones to reduce the likelihood of kids falling or tripping on their walk to school, and to ensure compliance with the American Disabilities Act;**
5. **Installing 2 new crosswalks at busy intersections;**
6. **Expanding upon the 2014-2015 City of Rochester School Walking Route Maps to include crossing guards at three new intersections;**
7. **Creating a four way stop in front of School #10 to force motorists to stop in the school zone;**
8. **Establishing a walking school bus program to ensure children have supervision while walking to school;**
9. **Replicating the walkability assessment in each Rochester quadrant to assess the barriers children face when walking to and from school;**
10. **Expanding recruitment strategies for the crossing guard program to include advertising at/on: each Rochester City School District School, local libraries, social media, micromedia outlets, and the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center.**

Why is Walkability around Schools Important?

One third of all school aged children in New York State are overweight or obese. Children who are obese or overweight are more likely to develop high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, joint problems, liver disease and poor self-esteem.^{3,4} Locally in Rochester, New York the numbers are striking. In the City of Rochester, 39 percent of children aged 2-18 are either overweight or obese.⁵

Physical activity is an important component of promoting a healthy weight in our kids. Active children are more likely to be at a healthy weight, which lowers their chance of developing chronic diseases.⁶ Being physically active is crucial for a child's development of strong muscles, bones, and vital organs. In fact, children who are active for at least 60 minutes a day have improved thinking and concentration skills that can lead to improvements in school grades.⁷

39%

The rate of
childhood obesity in
the City of
Rochester

Studies demonstrate that walking 1 mile to and from school each day means a child will get two-thirds of their daily recommended physical activity. Improving walkability in Rochester would promote an environment that supports daily physical activity.



However, despite the health benefits of incorporating physical activity throughout the day, the number of children who walk or bike to school has declined. National studies highlight that in 1969, over 50 percent of children in the United States walked or biked to school, while in 2009 reports demonstrate only 13 percent of children walk or bike.⁸

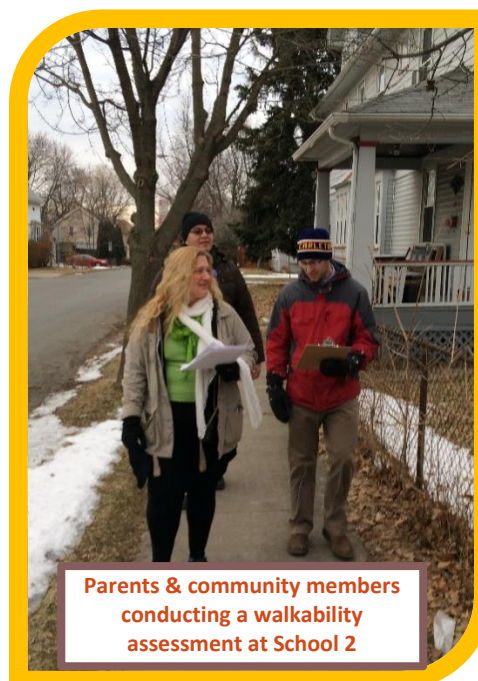
The opportunity for children to incorporate physical activity in their daily lives depends on their environment. Factors such as crime, traffic, and the physical infrastructure of surrounding roads, sidewalks, and homes can either contribute to or hinder parents' feelings of safety and whether they will allow their kids to walk to school or not. Studies show that parents are less likely to let their children actively commute if they perceive the neighborhood to be unsafe.^{9,10} Efforts to improve hazardous streets, traffic barriers and signage; or efforts to clear abandoned buildings and graffiti can increase the likelihood of children walking or biking to school.^{11,12}

Efforts to encourage walkability in neighborhoods can increase the likelihood by 30 percent that kids will walk or bike to school.¹³

Evaluating Walkability in Rochester's Southwest Neighborhoods

Recognizing the importance of walkability and the benefits of walking to school the federal government provided funding to cities across the country to encourage walking and biking to school. In 2013, the City of Rochester, with federal funding, established a program that gave money to schools, Parent Teacher Associations and community groups to create or enhance programs that supported safe routes to school. The money was used for programs such as student safety patrols, school speed zone awareness, walking school bus or bike train programs, bike racks, covered bike parking, and walk or bike to school day events.

Healthi Kids has been working closely with schools as they create opportunities for safe routes to school events, and encourage their students to walk or bike to school. In 2013 and 2014, Healthi Kids worked with schools #2, #10, and #19 to host Bike Rodeos (where kids learn how to ride a bike in a safe environment), and Walk to School Day events.



Parents & community members
conducting a walkability
assessment at School 2

In 2014-2015, Healthi Kids, community members and parents from Schools #2, #10 and #19 looked at walkability in each neighborhood to see what barriers children may face when walking to and from school every day. These schools were selected based on Healthi Kids' existing relationship with each school to promote walk and bike to school days, the schools' interest in safe routes to school programs, and the close proximity of the schools to one another. Our evaluation consisted of three stages:

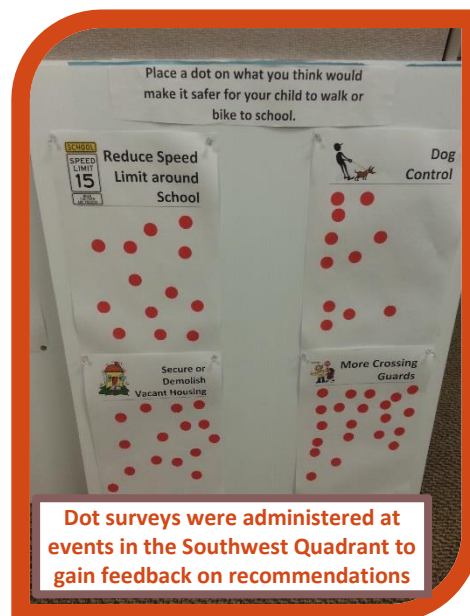
1. A neighborhood walkability assessment tool was administered by parents, community members and Healthi Kids staff, followed by a debrief of results; Informal interviews also occurred at monthly parent coffee hours at Schools #2 and #19 to gather qualitative data on the perceived barriers to walking to school.
2. Based on the results of the assessment, a dot survey was conducted to engage parents in designing solutions that best fit their community at School #10's Bike Rodeo (5/12/2015) and Hustle 2 Health at Flint St. R-Center (6/19/2015);
3. Finally, parental input was gathered at Arnett Branch library events (7/25/2015 and 7/30/2015) to gain insight into where the implementation of the recommendations should occur.

Stage 1: Administering the assessment tool

The assessment tool allowed parents and community members to walk the routes kids may take when walking to school (Appendix-1). Together, we focused on a two and a half block radius around each school. A total of seventeen walkability assessments were conducted at each school in March, June and November 2014, on seven separate days. The assessments were conducted at both the arrival and

dismissal times of each school. Schools #2 and #19 assessments were combined due to their close proximity to one another.

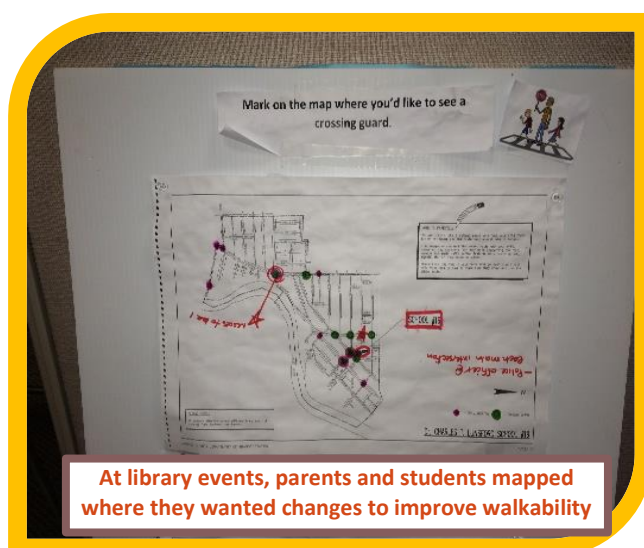
The tool asked participants to evaluate the usability of sidewalks; how easy it is to cross the street; about the feel of the walk in the neighborhood; and how accessible the school is when the bell rings. Participants were able to rate their experience and provide Healthi Kids with additional feedback on their perceptions of the barriers children may face when walking to school. Informal interviews were conducted with parents at monthly parent coffee hours at Schools #2 and #19 to provide Healthi Kids staff with insight into what parents perceived the barriers to be in allowing their kids to walk to school. Following the assessment and informal interviews, and based on the feedback we received, Healthi Kids staff gathered pictures of needed repairs to street signage, crosswalks and sidewalks.



Stage 2: Administering the dot survey on potential recommendations

After our initial assessment of walkability, Healthi Kids staff created 10 recommendations as potential solutions to the results. Staff attended two events in the South West Quadrant to engage parents and obtain additional feedback. Parent input was gathered at School #10's Bike Rodeo and Hustle 2 Health at Flint St. R-Center. A dot survey was administered, and parents were asked to identify which recommendation they felt would solve issues of walkability in their neighborhood (Appendix-2). The top results from the dot survey were then collected and disseminated into nine potential recommendations to share with the School Traffic Safety Committee, the City of Rochester, and Monroe County.

Stage 3: Gathering parent & student feedback on recommendations



The final stage of our assessment included two sessions at Arnett Branch Library where staff asked parents and students in the community to mark up maps, and share their ideas of where they would like to see additional crossing guards placed, updated signage, crosswalks restriped and speed trailers installed. Using the 2014-2015 City of Rochester School Walking Route Maps parents and students identified where the City of Rochester and Monroe County could make changes to improve walkability. Final recommendations proposed in the report are an accumulation of all data gathered throughout the assessment.

Walkability Results

The results indicate several key barriers to walkability in Rochester's Southwest neighborhood.

At School #10, parents felt that it was challenging to cross the street in a safe way due to traffic and lack of crosswalks. 100% of parents responded there were either no crosswalks, or not enough crossing guards around the school. Additionally, traffic was a concern. 66% of parents felt traffic went much too fast, particularly on Genesee Park Boulevard and 63% of participants felt that there was too much traffic. Additionally, parents felt that traffic at the intersection of Congress Avenue and Virginia Avenue in front of the school made crossing the street unsafe for kids.

"I don't let my children walk to school by themselves - it's not safe"

- Parent at School #2

At Schools #2 and #19, the majority of parents felt uneasy when walking around the school. Results around School #2 indicate that it was not easy to cross the street due to traffic moving too fast on Reynolds Street, and the location of the school's bus drop off zone. The area in front of the school where the buses line up to dropoff and pickup kids blocks many of the stop signs and crosswalks on Reynolds St. Parents felt that many motorists could not see the crosswalks that children were supposed to use to get to school. At both Schools #2 and #19, 89% of parents responded it was challenging to access the school because there were not enough crossing guards on Reynolds Street or at Ford Street & Dr. Samuel McCree Way. Parents were frustrated that while crossing guards are present on Reynolds, there were no guards stationed on the east side of the school for children walking from homes from that area.



Through informal interviews with participants following the formal assessment and conversations with parents at monthly parent coffee hours at schools #2 and #19, Healthi Kids staff gathered feedback from parents in each school community about additional barriers they felt their kids faced while walking to school.

Consistently, barriers in the social environment were raised as key concerns for parents. In particular, parents shared they worried about the safety of their child

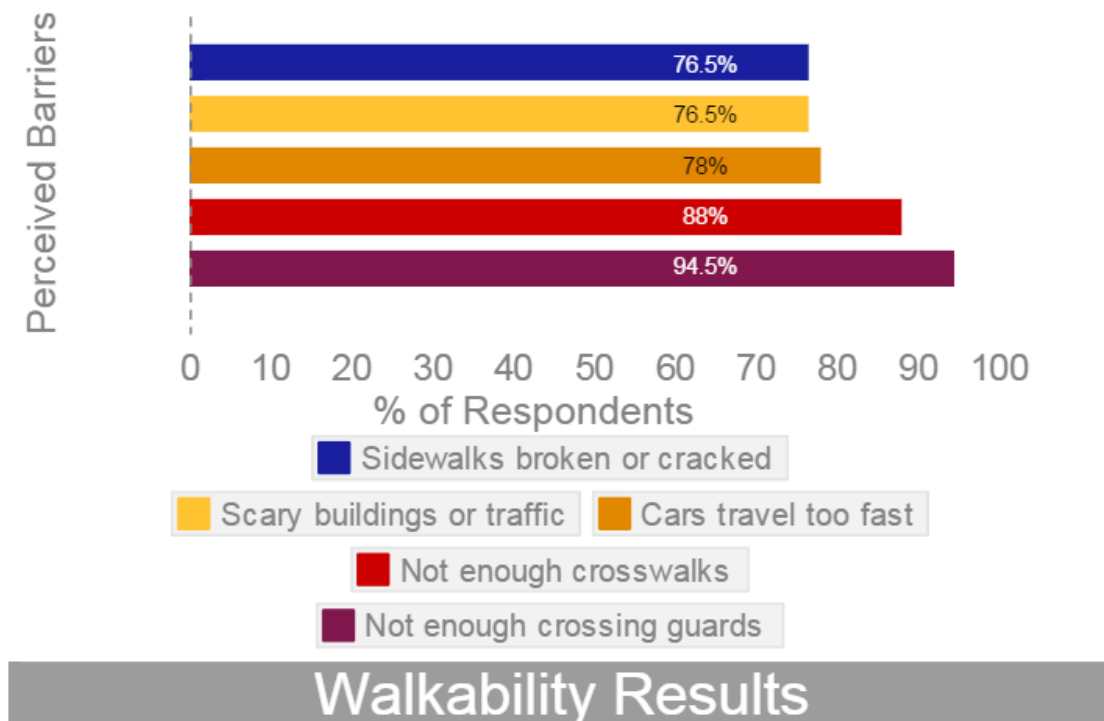
when walking to school. The crime rate in the Southwest Quadrant and the Open-Air Drug Market on major streets surrounding the schools were raised as key barriers to walkability. Studies demonstrate that these markets generate drug related crime and social disorder which contribute to a lower quality of life for families and residents who live in the neighborhood.¹⁴ The open-air drug market on Jefferson Avenue in particular was identified as a major barrier to walkability around School #2.

One grandmother at Arnett Library said “There’s no way I’d let my eight year old granddaughter walk past Jefferson by herself with people just hanging on corners and the Open-Air Drug Market. Would you let your child do that?”. A parent at School #2 during May’s parent coffee hour shared she walks her kids to and from school every day, she expressed “I don’t let my children walk to school by themselves – it’s not safe.” Many parents agreed the presence of additional crossing guards would ensure more “eyes on the road” which would in turn, improve their perceptions of neighborhood safety.

“There’s no way I’d let my eight year old granddaughter walk past Jefferson by herself...Would you let your child do that?”

Grandmother at Arnett Library

Overall, the combined results from our initial walkability assessment tool from Schools #2, #10, and #19 demonstrate that the top five concerns for parents are: broken, cracked and uneven sidewalks (76.5%), scary buildings or too much traffic (76.5%), cars traveling too fast (78%), not enough crosswalks (88%), and not enough crossing guards (94.5%). Appendix-3 provides detailed results from our walkability assessment.



Recommendations

Armed with our walkability data from schools #2, #10 and #19, Healthi Kids compiled a list of 10 potential recommendations to address the issues. Parent input was gathered at School 10's Bike Rodeo, Hustle 2 Health at Flint St. R-Center, and events at Arnett Branch Library. Parents then identified what changes they would like to see in their neighborhood. At School #10's Bike Rodeo, parents provided 48 feedback dots on the recommendations; while at Hustle 2 Health 136 feedback dots were gathered (Appendix-2).

Parents indicated to Healthi Kids they wanted to see more crossing guards, secured vacant housing, repaired sidewalks, restriped crosswalks, updated signage around schools, and cars to slow down on the streets around schools.

Parent Recommendations to Improve Walkability at Schools #2, #10 and #19



With recommendations from parents, residents and community partners, Healthi Kids staff hit the pavement to collect data on what signage, crosswalks, and sidewalks need repair around each school. Based on parent input and data, it is clear restriped crosswalks, speed trailers, updated signage, repaired sidewalks, new crosswalks, additional crossing guards, and the installation of a four way stop would all improve walkability in Southwest Rochester.

Healthi Kids staff continues to provide data from our assessments to parents in the Southwest Quadrant. Based on input gathered at Arnett Branch Library, parents and students provided data to Healthi Kids that is reflected in our recommendations below. Appendix-4 provides details on specific repairs/replacements to specific signage, crosswalks and sidewalks; and includes a map of recommendations.

To improve walkability around Rochester's Schools in the Southwest quadrant, Healthi Kids recommends the School Traffic Safety Committee, the City of Rochester and Monroe County implement the following improvements for the 2015-2016 school year:

1. Restriping eight faded crosswalks and piloting a colorful crosswalk project around schools #2, #10, and #19 to promote traffic calming and notify motorists of pedestrian crossings (Appendix-5).
2. Installing three speed trailers on major streets near schools (Genesee Street, Chili Avenue, and Genesee Park Blvd,) to alert motorists to their speed; and or installing speed tubes along the same streets to allow the city to gather data on speeding in school zones.
3. Updating six faded street signs around schools to improve visibility for kids walking to school and for motorists looking for parking. Replacing deteriorated street signs improves the primary communication device to motorists of the rules of the road.¹⁵
4. Repairing uneven sidewalks on *Virginia Avenue* and *Gillette Avenue* to reduce the likelihood of kids falling or tripping on their walk to and from school, and to ensure compliance with the American Disabilities Act.
5. Installing two new crosswalks at *Genesee Park Blvd. & Gillette Street* and *Dr. Samuel McCree Way & Ford Street*



Faded signage at Reynolds and Cady makes it hard for kids to see what route they should take to walk to school.



Crosswalk at Cady St. & Jefferson Ave. that requires restriping. Crosswalks improve safety by directing pedestrians to areas with proper traffic control

6. Expanding upon 2014-2015 City of Rochester School crossing guard placements to improve parent perceptions of safety¹⁶ by including and ensuring crossing guards at *Dr. Samuel McCree Way & Ford Street*, *Frost Avenue & Warwick Avenue*, *Magnolia & Genesee Street*, and *Shelter & Jefferson Avenue*
7. Creating a four way stop in front of School #10 at Congress Avenue & Virginia Avenue to slow down traffic in front of the school.
8. Establishing a walking school bus program to ensure children have supervision while walking to school. A walking school bus can increase parent perceptions of safety.¹⁷
9. Replicating the walkability assessment in each Rochester quadrant to assess the barriers children face when walking to and from school (Appendix-6).
10. Expanding recruitment strategies for the crossing guard program to include advertising at/on: each Rochester City School District School, local libraries, social media, micromedia outlets, and the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center.

Endnotes

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⁷ Sattelmair, J. & Ratey, J. (2009). Physically active play and cognition: An academic matter? *Journal of Play*. Winter Ed. p. 365-374.

⁸ The National Center for Safe Routes to School (2011). How Children Get to School: School Travel Patterns from 1969 to 2009.

⁹ DeWeese, R., Yedidia, M., Punam Ohri-Vachaspati, D. (2013). Neighborhood perceptions and active school commuting in low-income cities. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. 45(4), 393-400.

¹⁰ Cohen, D. et al. (2003, March). Neighborhood physical conditions and health. *AM J Public Health*. 93(3): 467-417.

¹¹ Perdue, W., Stone, L. & Gostin, L. (2003). The built environment and its relationship to the public's health: The legal framework. *AM J Public Health*. 93(9): 1390-1394.

¹² Humpel, N., Owen, N. and Leslie, E. (2002). Environmental factors associated with adults' participation in physical activity. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 22(3), 188-99.

¹³ McDonald, N., Steiner, R., Lee, C., Rhoulac Smith, T., Zhu, X., & Yange, Y. (2014) Impact of the Safe Routes to School Program on Walking and Bicycling. *Journal of the American Planning Association*

¹⁴ Hough, M. (2005, January). Drug dealing in open-air markets. United States Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Retrieved August 4, 2015, from
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¹⁵ U.S. Department of Transportation (2007). Maintaining traffic sign retroreflectivity: Impacts on state and local agencies. U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. Retrieved August 5, 2015 from:
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/07042/07042.pdf>

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¹⁷ National Center for Safe Routes to School. (2015, July). The Walking School Bus: Combining Safety, Fun and the Walk to School. Safe Routes to School Guide. Retrieved August 4, 2015 from
http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/walking_school_bus/pdf/wsb_guide.pdf

Appendix 1: Healthi Kids Walkability Survey



School #2 Walkability Survey

Name: _____

Location: _____

Date: _____

Time of Day: _____

Rating Scale:	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Awful	Many problems	Some problems	Good	Very good	Excellent

1. Was there a usable sidewalk the whole way?

Where?

- ☐ Part/all of the sidewalk was missing
☐ Sidewalks was not wide enough
☐ Things blocked the sidewalk
☐ People / bikers blocked the sidewalk
☐ Drivers backed out of the driveways without looking
☐ Sidewalk was broken or cracked
☐ Other comments: _____

☐ Yes☐ No

Rating: (circle one) 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. How did the walk feel?

Where?

- ☐ Scary dogs
☐ Scary people
☐ Scary noises
☐ Scary buildings / vacant lots / graffiti
☐ Too much garbage, broken glass
☐ Too much car / truck exhaust
☐ Too much traffic
☐ Needed more grass / flowers / trees
☐ Not well lit
☐ Other comments: _____

☐ Good☐ Not so Good

Rating: (circle one) 1 2 3 4 5 6

School #2 Walkability Study



3. Was it easy to cross the street?

Where?

- ☐ Road was too wide
☐ Traffic going too fast / not stopping at signs
☐ Too much traffic
☐ Couldn't see the traffic (what was blocking your view?)
☐ No traffic life
☐ Traffic light didn't give me enough time to cross
☐ No crosswalk where I needed to cross
☐ No curb cuts / ramps where I needed to cross
☐ Other comments: _____

☐ Good☐ Not so Good

Rating: (circle one) 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. Was it easy and welcoming to access the school?

Where?

- ☐ Too many buses blocking my way
☐ Too many cars blocking my way
☐ No crossing guards to help me cross
☐ No school staff to welcome me
☐ School building or grounds not well maintained
☐ No comfortable place to wait for dismissal
☐ No place to safely lock a bike
☐ Needed more grass / flowers / trees
☐ Other comments: _____

☐ Good☐ Not so Good

Rating: (circle one) 1 2 3 4 5 6

Rating Totals:

Question #1: _____

Question #3: _____

Question #2: _____

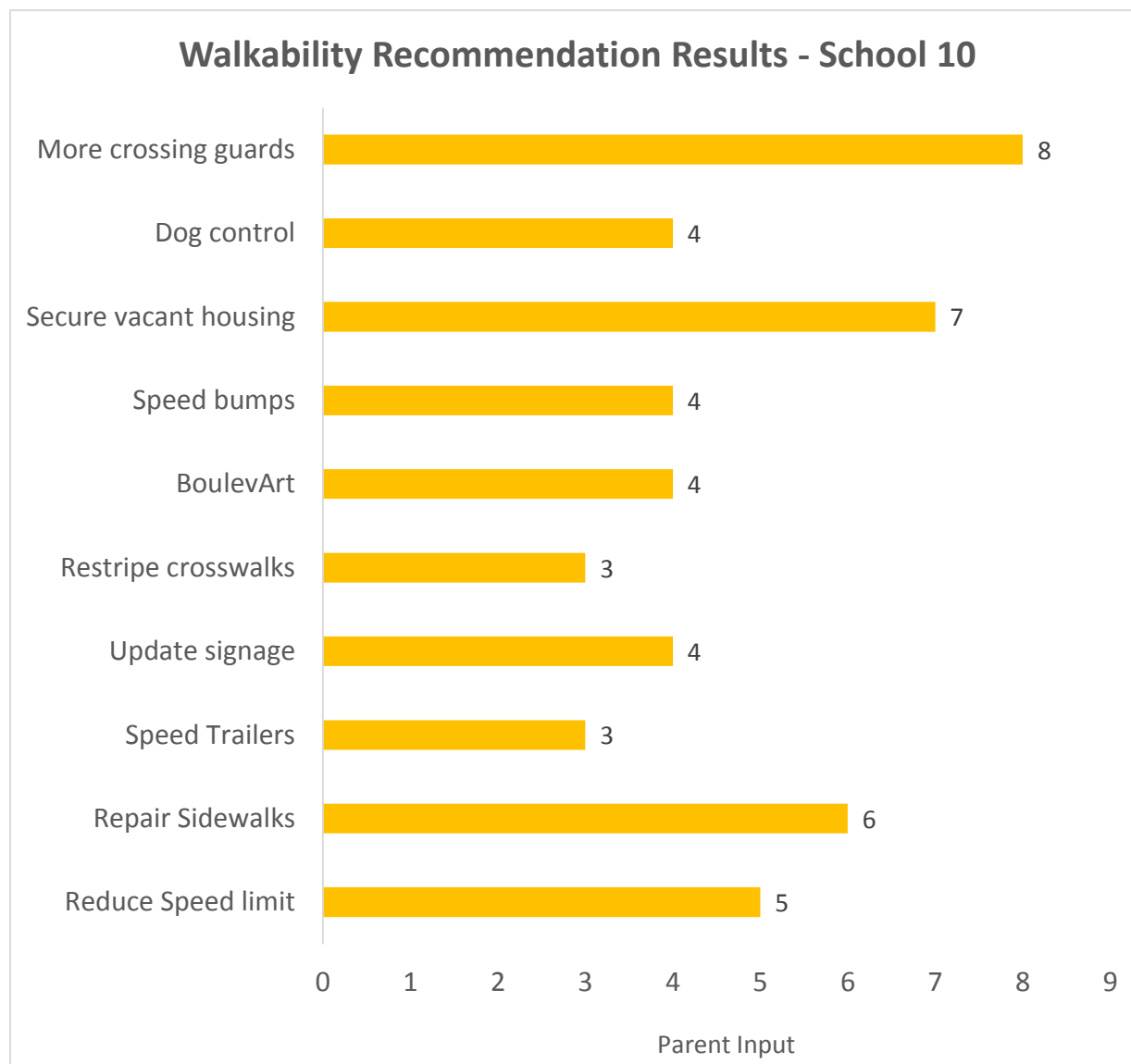
Question #4: _____

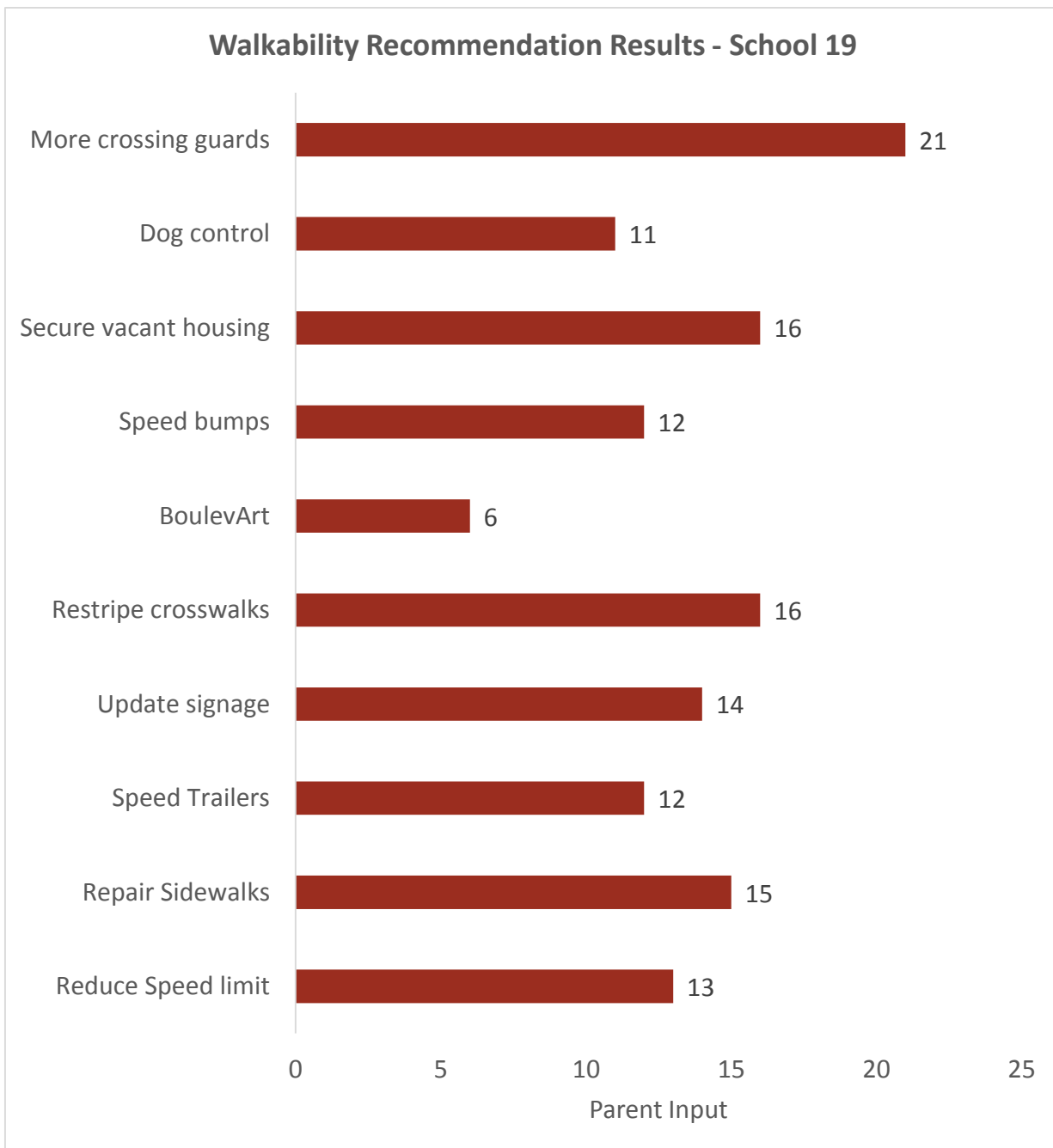
Grand Total: _____

School #2 Walkability Study

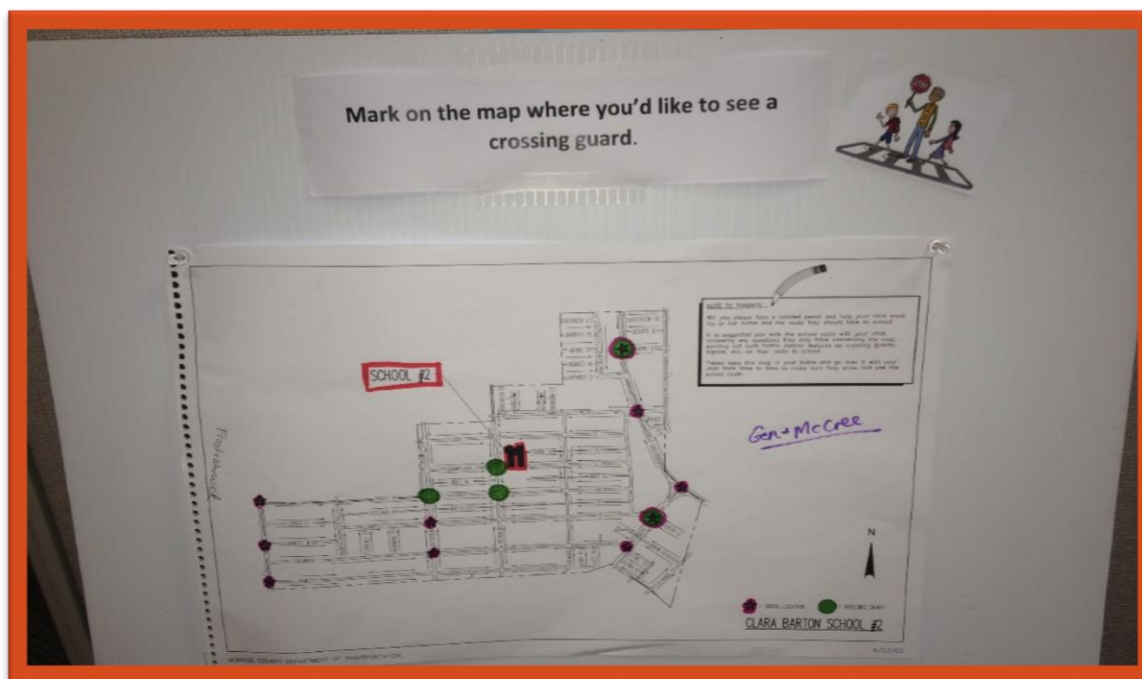
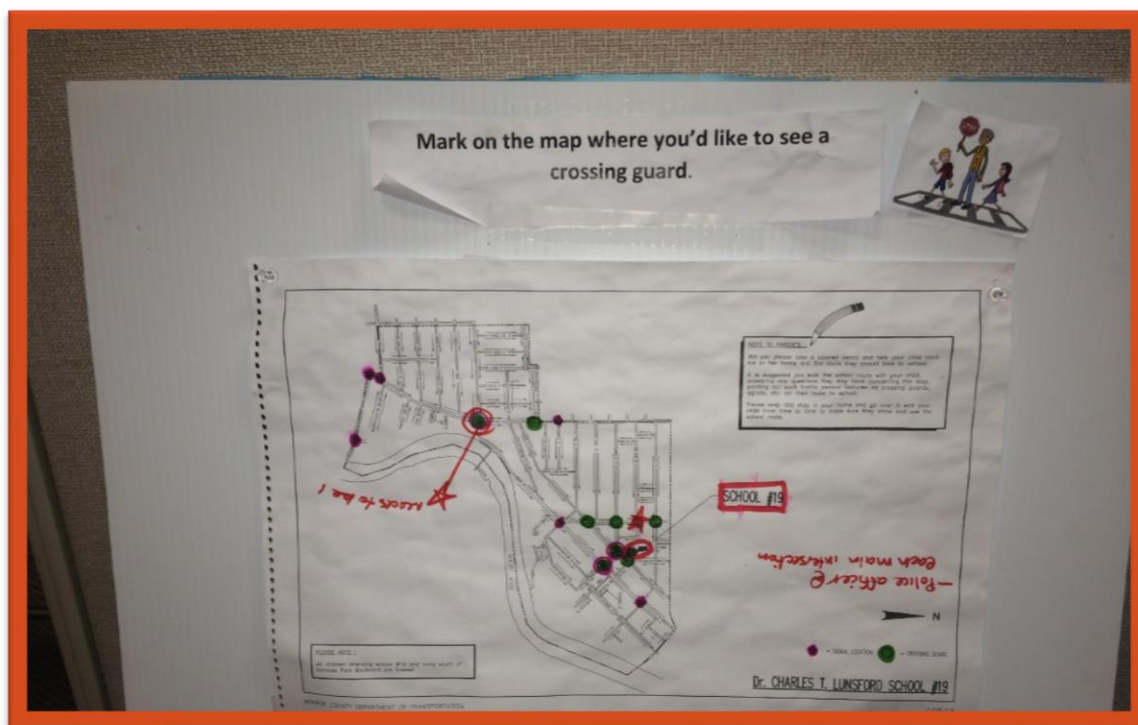
Appendix 2: Parent Engagement

A) School #10 Bike Rodeo (data collected: 5/12/2015)

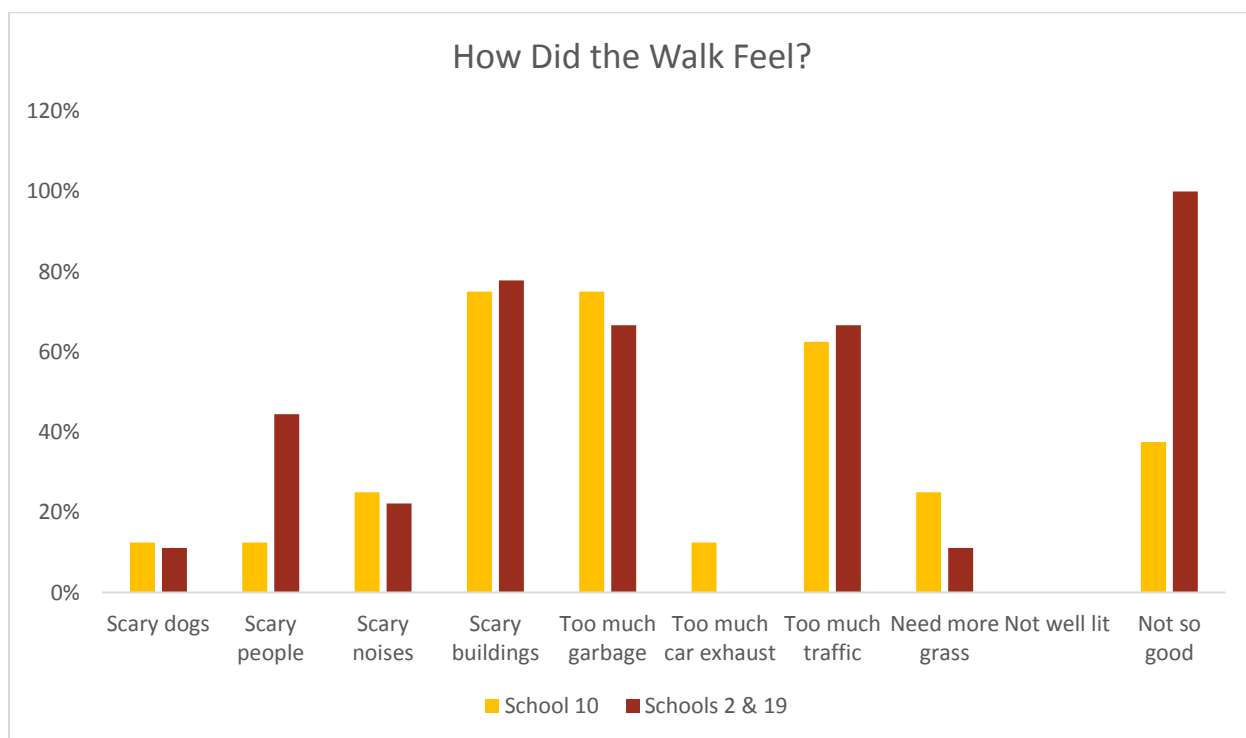
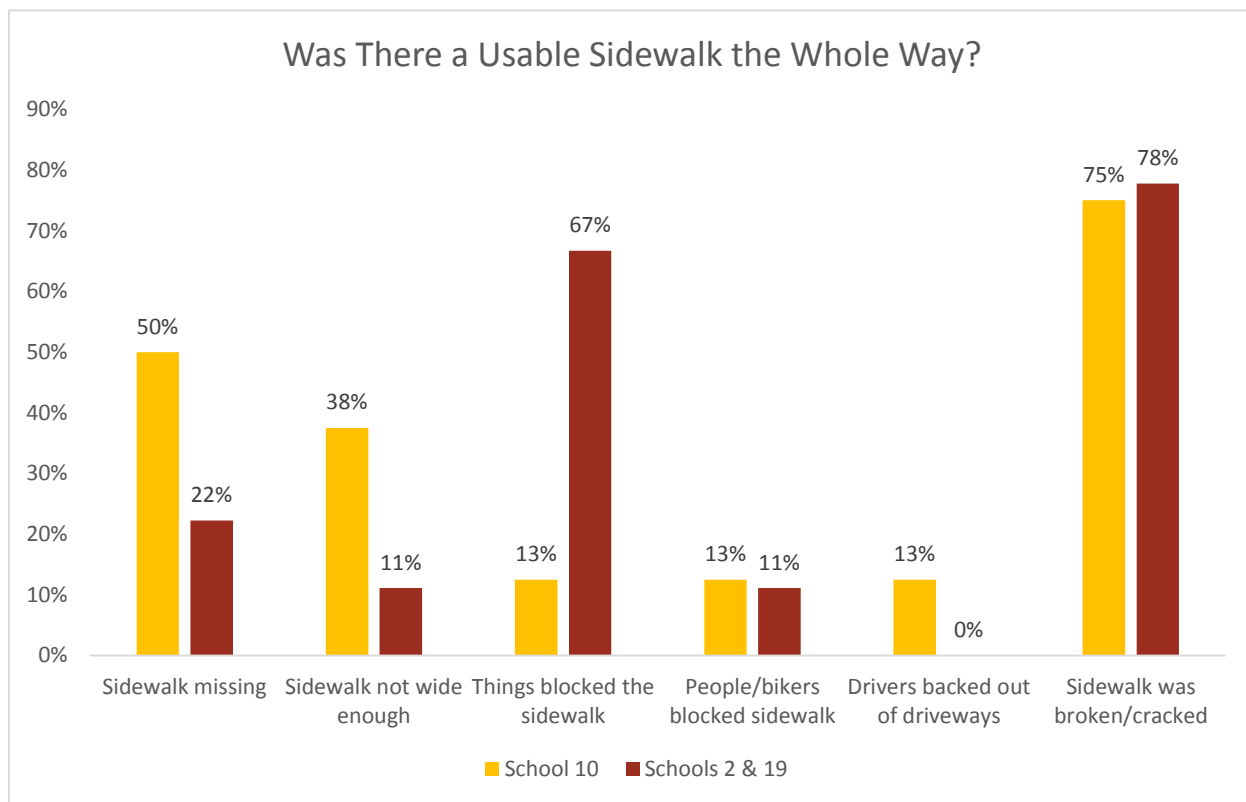


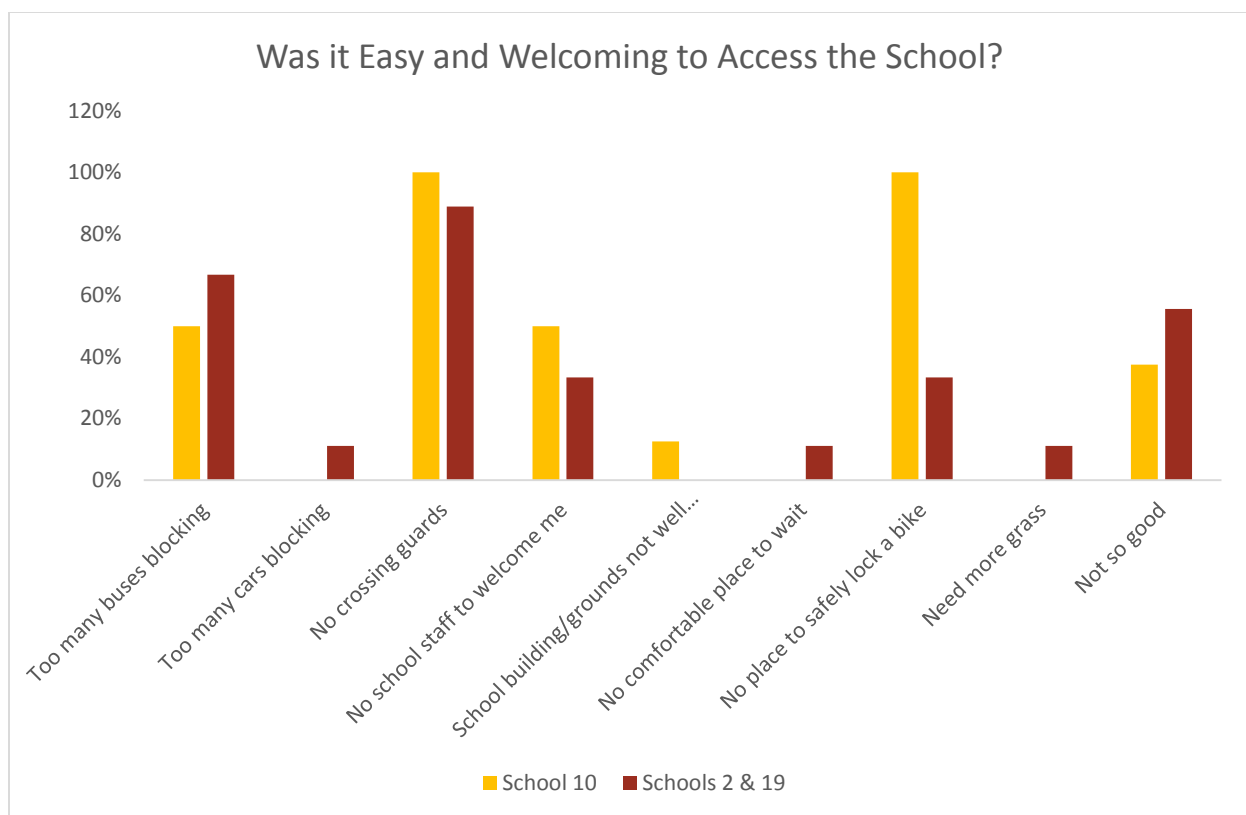
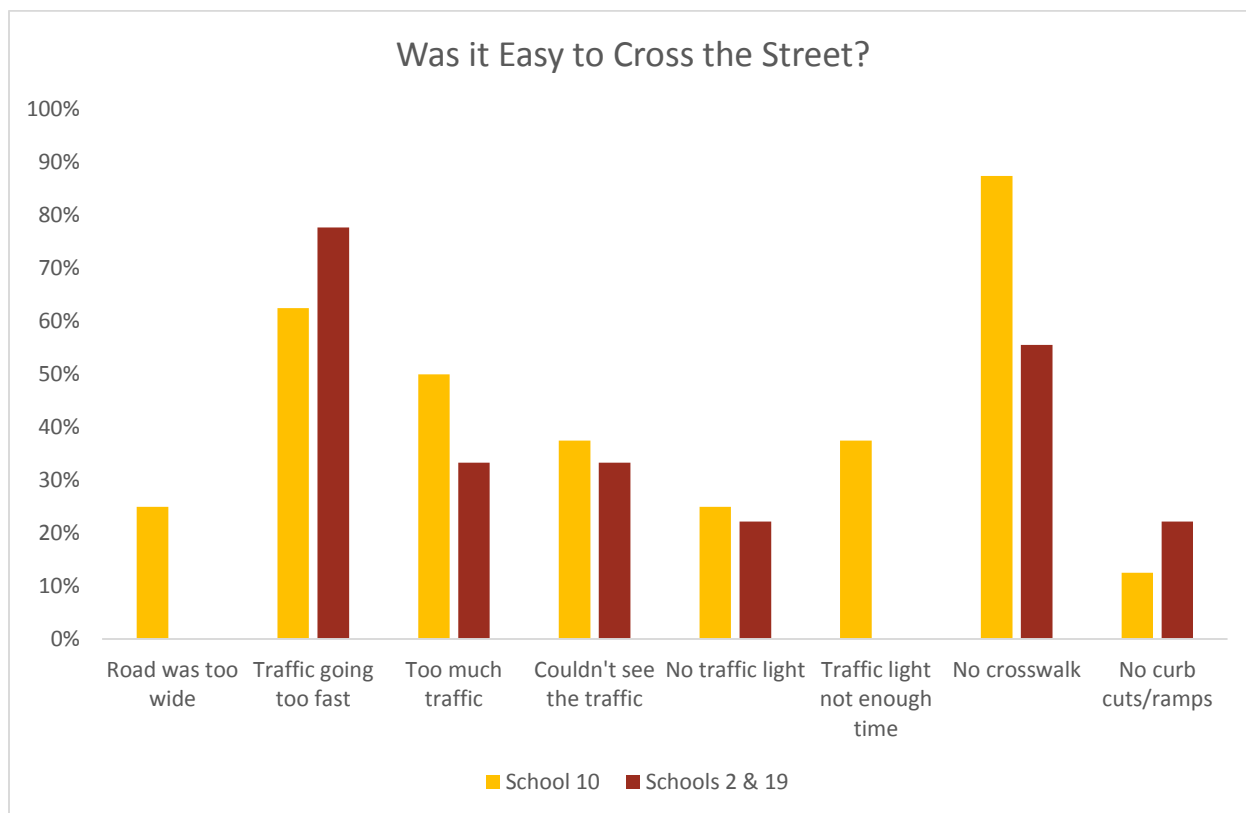
B) Hustle 2 Health – Flint St. R-Center (data collected: 6/19/2015)

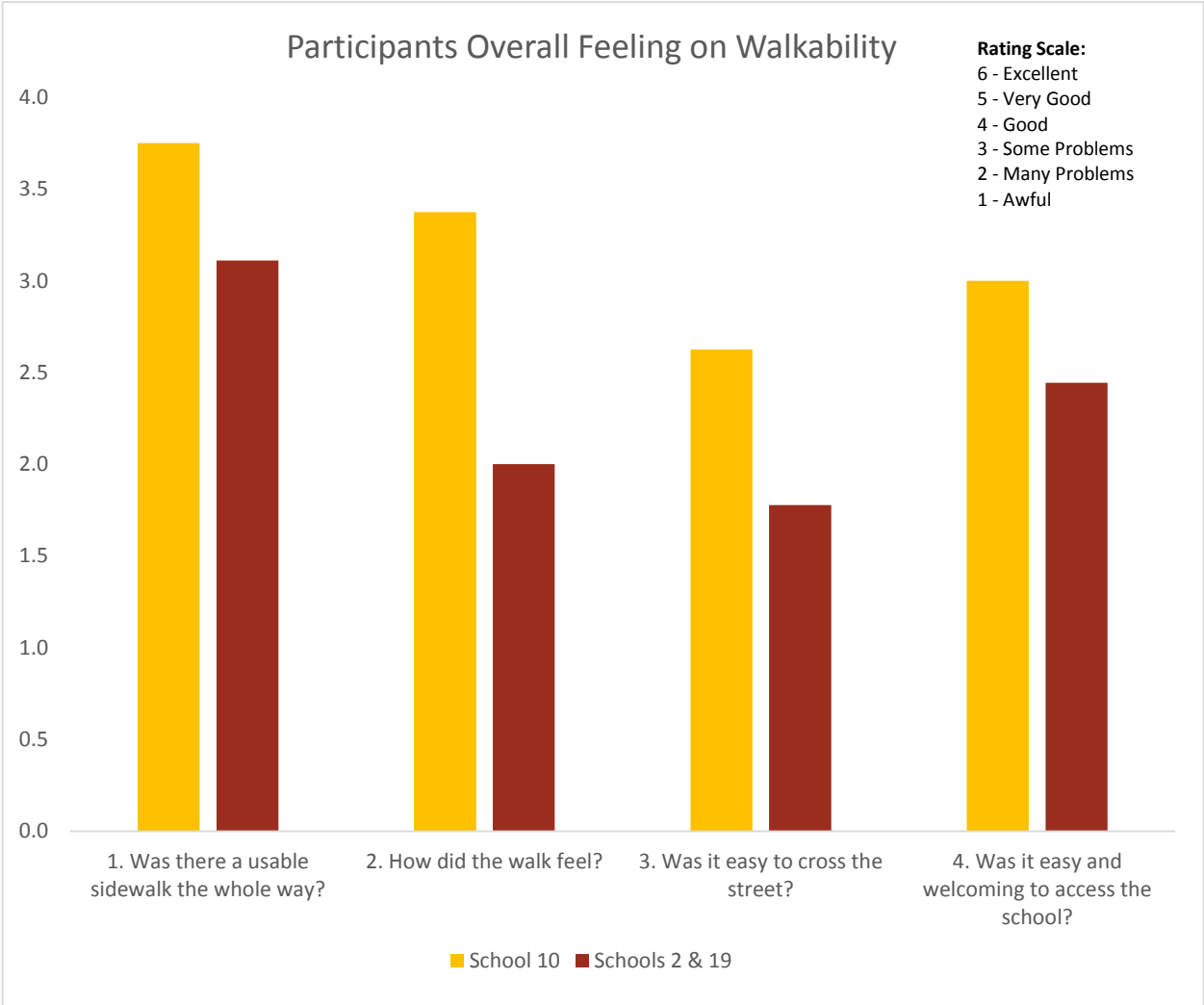
C) Arnett Branch Library Events (data collected: 7/25/2015 & 7/30/2015)



Appendix 3: Walkability Results

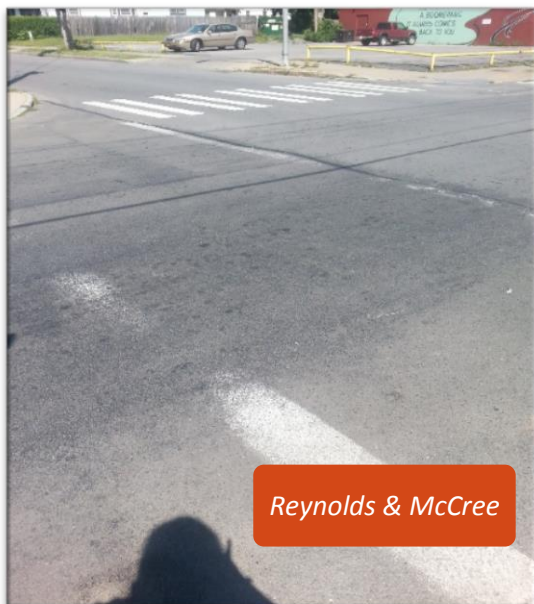


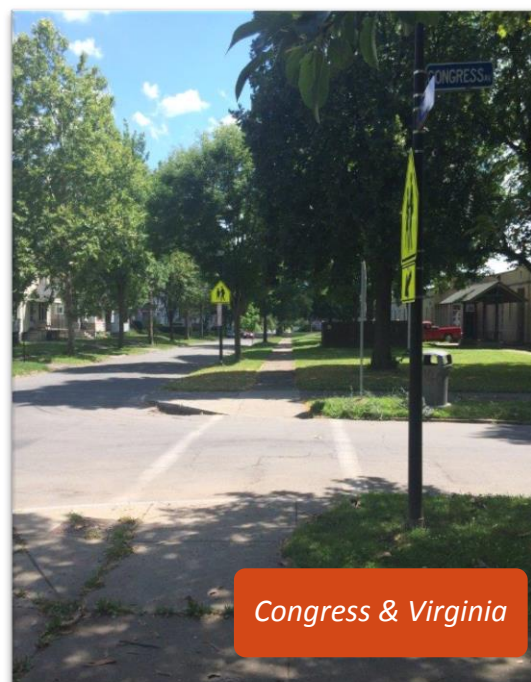
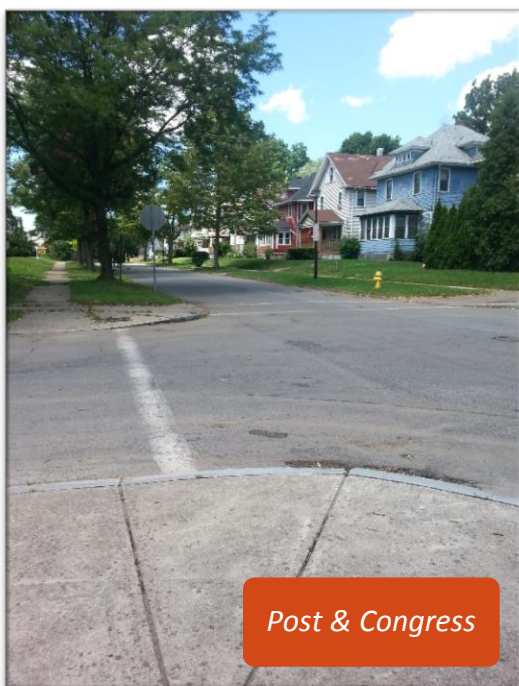
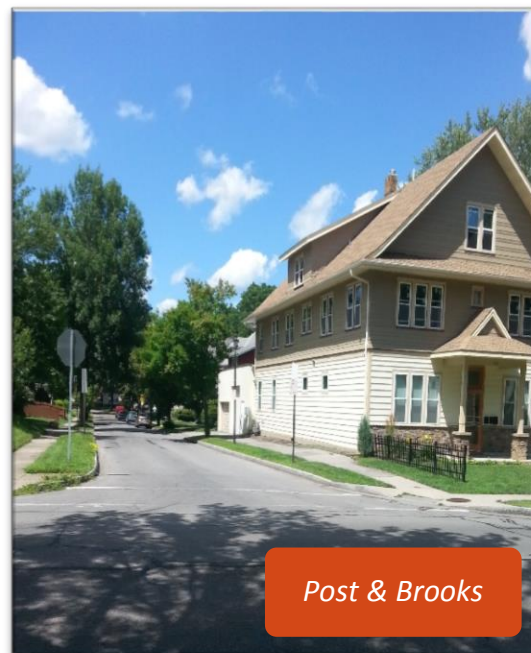




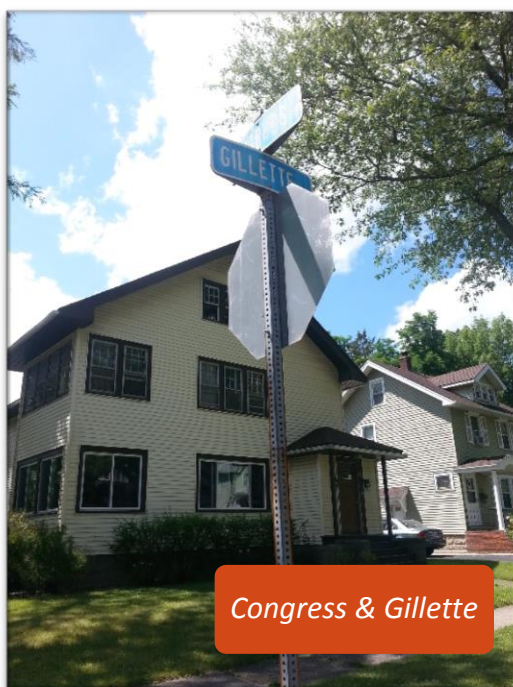
Appendix 4: Locations of Recommendations & Photographs of Evidence

A) Crosswalk restriping:



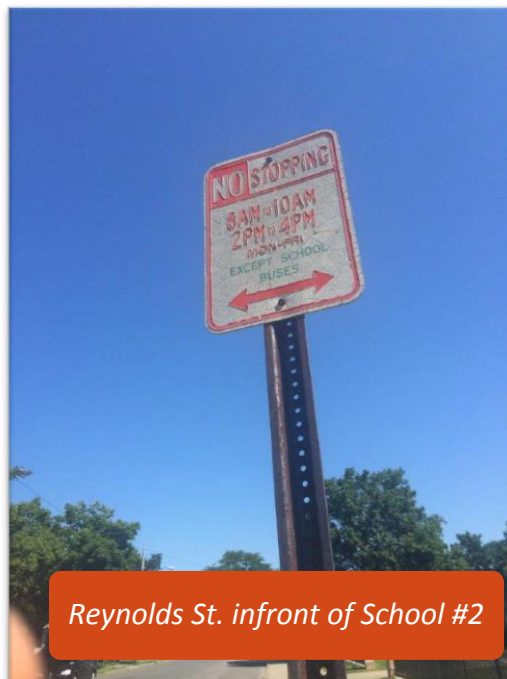


B) Updating Faded or Broken Signage



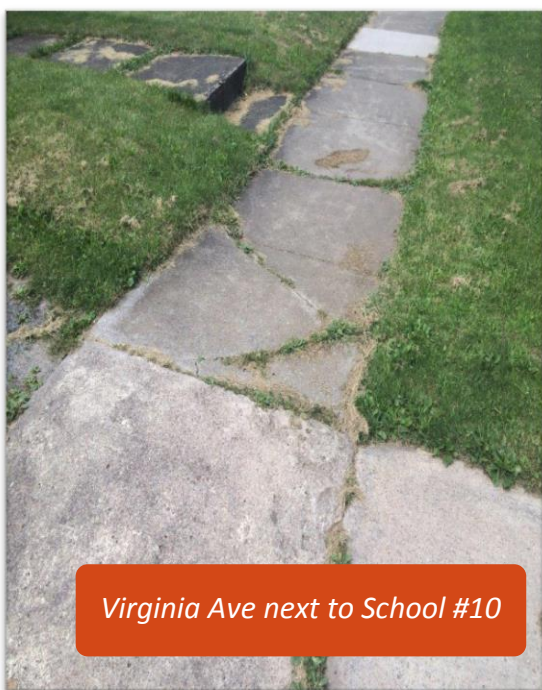


Spruce Ave & Woodbine Ave

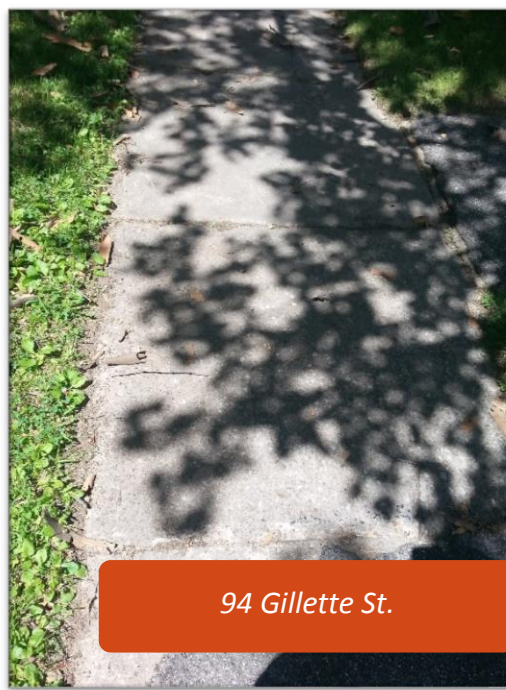


Reynolds St. in front of School #2

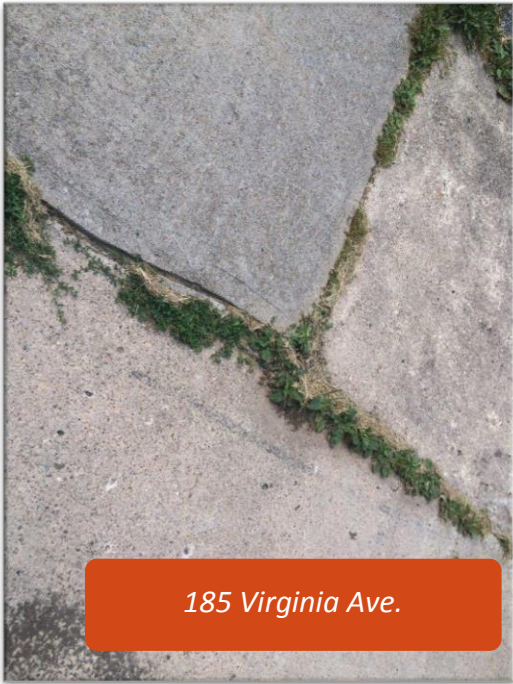
C) Repairing Uneven Sidewalks



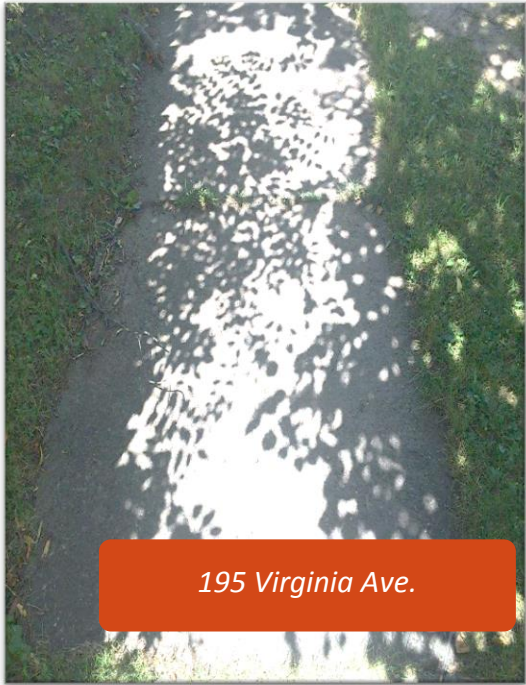
Virginia Ave next to School #10



94 Gillette St.



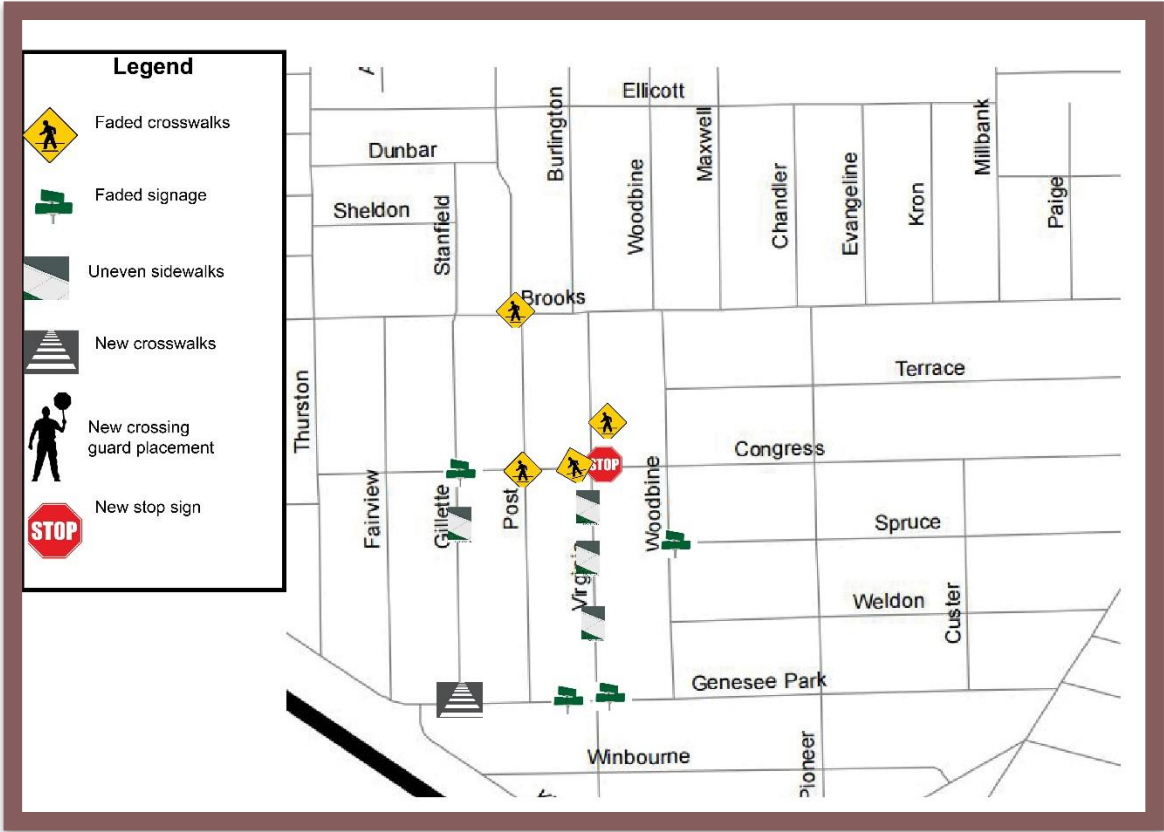
185 Virginia Ave.



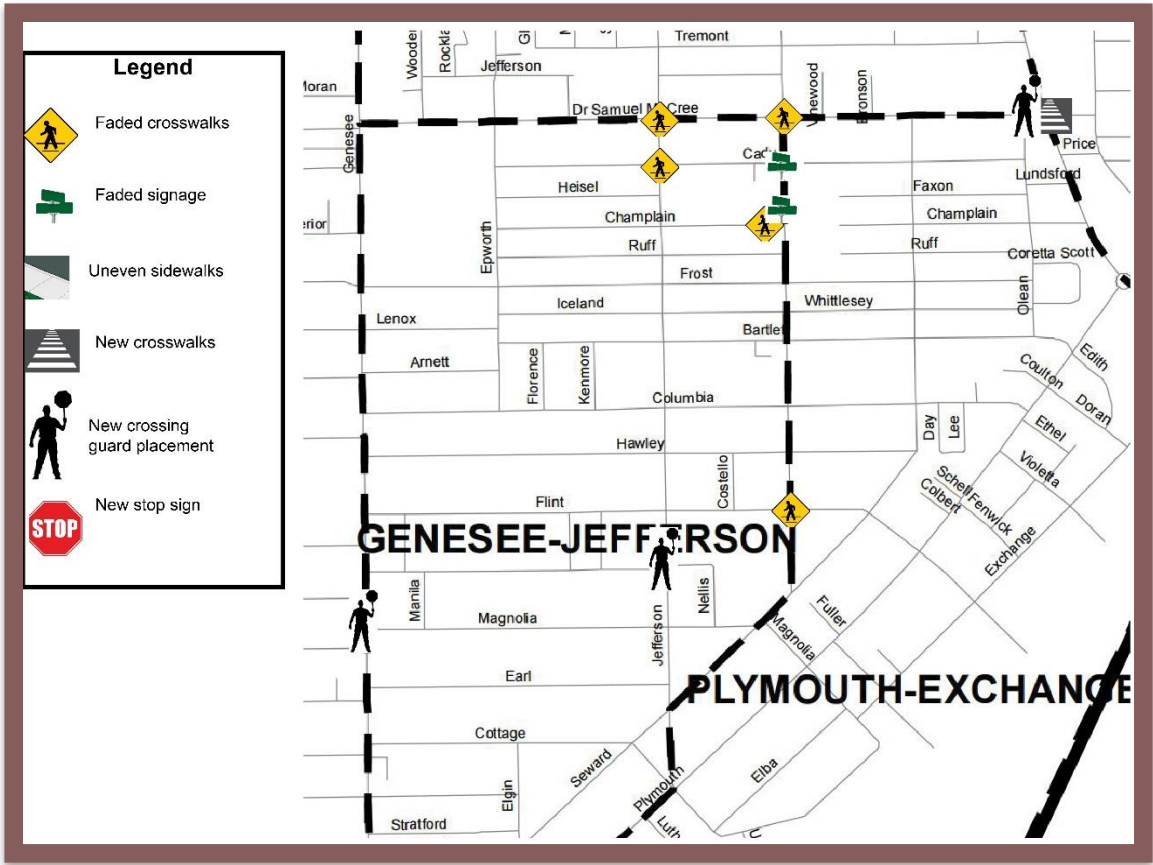
195 Virginia Ave.

D) Map of Recommendations

School 10 Recommendations



Schools 2 & 19 Recommendations



Appendix 5: Reconsidering Traditional Crosswalks

A recent evaluation project was prepared by the Model Healthy Choices coalition in Auburn, New York. The purpose of the study was to select various strategies for traffic calming and implement various interventions one at a time to determine which has the largest impact on driver behavior when approaching an intersection used by pedestrians.¹⁸ In 2013, the City of Auburn piloted their red crosswalk intervention.



Their assessment demonstrated that the red crosswalk had the largest impact on motorist behavior. Their results show that 96% of all motorists stopped at the new crosswalk, versus traditional crosswalks where only 42% of motorists stopped.¹⁹

The City of Auburn, New York has argued that repainting crosswalks is a low-cost and effective means to promote traffic calming in neighborhoods. They also argue that red crosswalks are more advantageous in winter months. With the snow on the ground, salt and snow on the roads makes it challenging for drivers to see traditionally white striped crosswalks. Red crosswalks can enhance visibility of pedestrian crossings during the winter months.

Given the success of these crosswalks in Auburn, New York, Healthi Kids recommends the creation of a pilot project to install red crosswalks on busy streets around schools in the Southwest quadrant. Potential intersections to consider include: Reynolds & Cady, Jefferson & Frost, Seward & Jefferson, Congress & Virginia, and Virginia & Post.

¹⁸ Model Healthy Choices Cayuga County (2015). The Genesee St. Red Crosswalks Project. Presentation to the New York State Department of Health Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work and Play Contractors April 28, 2015.

¹⁹ House, S. (2015, June). See and be seen: Cayuga County promoting pedestrian safety through colorful crosswalks. Auburn Citizen. Retrieved online August 4, 2015 from: http://auburnpub.com/lifestyles/see-and-be-seen-cayuga-county-promoting-pedestrian-safety-through/article_e4006d27-f343-5eb5-87f5-4c5b532b56e2.html

Appendix 6: Lessons Learned

Healthi Kids recommends the replication of the walkability assessment in each City of Rochester Quadrant. Our assessment primarily focused on three schools in the Southwest Quadrant, however, our methodology and assessment tool could be easily translated to other schools and neighborhoods in the city. Understanding and improving the barriers to walkability can increase the number of children walking to school and improve perceptions of safety around schools.²⁰

1. Parents are Partners

Parent engagement was key to the success of our walkability analysis. Parents want the best for their kids, and as partners, they are a key resource to understanding the barriers to walking to school and perceptions of neighborhood safety. Additionally, parents are the decision makers. Parents decide if they will let their child walk to school, or if they want to send them to a school that will provide bussing. Working with parents, they were able to share their recommendations, voice their ideas, and provide their perspective on why they may, or may not let their child walk to school.



Parents are the key partners in a walkability assessment.

In our first stage of the assessment, Healthi Kids collaborated with parents to administer our quantitative assessment of walkability. We recruited parents at monthly coffee hours at each school and by working with the parent liaison at each school. By recruiting parents from each school we were examining, we gained valuable insight into walkability barriers, and empowered parents to be advocates for their kids.

The quantitative assessment however was only one piece of the walkability puzzle. In order to gain a better understanding of what was happening, and why kids may or may not be walking to school, informal interviews and story sharing was invaluable. By attending community events and hosting parent coffee hours in schools, Healthi Kids was able to gather important information on what parents would like to see in their neighborhood. The qualitative data that was gathered was key to understanding the quantitative data. The stories and informal interviews provided context and rationale to our data collection.

2. Gather Student & Additional Parent Feedback

After our initial analysis of our quantitative and qualitative assessment, we put together a series of recommendations and reached out again to students and parents. By attending various community events at schools, R-Centers and local libraries, we were able to access a number of parents who we may not have reached at parent coffee hours alone.



In our experience, community events like Hustle 2 Health and Neighborhood libraries are happy to provide the space for community input. At each place, we set up at a table with interactive dot surveys and maps where parents could provide their input. Participating at local events and hosting a table at local libraries allowed us to also hear from other community members and students.

Students wanted to share their

experiences walking to school. They shared with Healthi Kids staff that traffic travelled too fast, and they did not like walking to school because it did not feel safe.

In many cases, community members approached our table and provided their recommendations on what they have experienced walking in their neighborhood. At one session at Arnett Library, a woman approached our table and shared that while she no longer had school-aged kids, she lived around School #19 and said it was important for an extra set of eyes to be on the road before and after school.

3. Assess Walkability in Each School Community

Embrace diversity and treat each school community individually. Our school communities are diverse and have different needs, requirements, and barriers to addressing walkability around schools. In our assessment of Schools #2, #10, and #19, parents in each school shared different barriers and solutions. While all schools wanted more crossing guards, our analysis and input sessions demonstrated a difference between the barriers at each school.

Understanding the individual barriers at each school was helpful as we gathered the data of the crosswalks, signage and sidewalks that requirement improvements/updating.

²⁰ Dimaggio C and Li G. (2013). Effectiveness of a Safe Routes to School Program in Preventing School-Aged Pedestrian Injury. *Pediatrics*, 131(2): 290-296.



*Healthi Kids is an initiative of Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency. By advocating for a handful of public policy and practice changes, the **Healthi Kids Coalition** is blazing a path for healthier, more active children in Rochester and Monroe County, N.Y. Our change agenda calls for better school food, safer play areas, food standards at childhood centers, at least 60 minutes of in-school physical activity, and policies that support breastfeeding.*

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