



Measuring Community Walkability for Children

Presentation to the Consortium to
Lower Obesity in Chicago Children
September 14, 2004



Measuring Community Walkability for Children

The Center for Neighborhood Technology:

- Advocacy, public policy
- Environmental and economic development focus
- Research and tool creation
- A market-place innovator



Measuring Community Walkability for Children

Purpose of the grant

- Develop a methodology to assess how parental/caregiver perception(s) compare to other measures of walkability
 - Parents who perceive streets as unsafe may discourage walking
 - Reduced physical activity is linked to overweight or obesity in children and adults



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- TASK (Transportation that is Active and Safe for Kids) conducted focus groups with parents in 2002
- Measurements of community walkability allow us to compare parent perceptions of potential danger to objective data.



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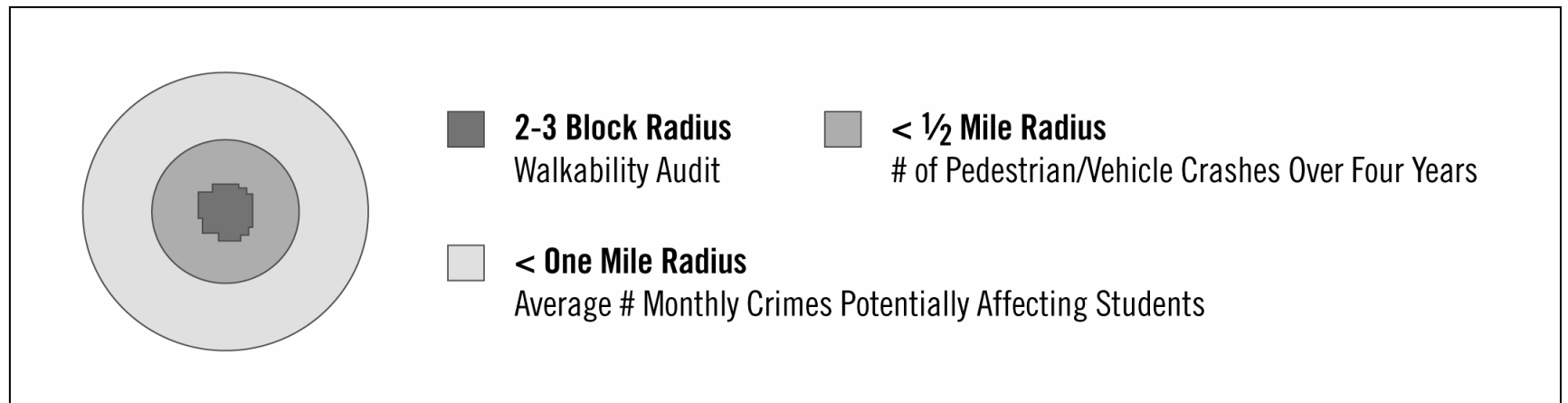
- Assessment of environment around four schools in two communities:
 - W. Garfield Park
 - Delano
 - Our Lady of the West Side
 - Uptown/Edgewater
 - Goudy
 - St. Ita Religious Education Center

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- Other TASK schools
- Ashburn
 - Dawes 3810 W. 81st Place
 - St. Bede the Venerable 8200 S. Kostner Ave.
- West Town
 - Von Humboldt Elementary 2620 W. Hirsch Ave.
 - St. Mark's 2510 W. Cortez St.

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- Data collected
 - Walkability audits by CNT staff
 - Official pedestrian/vehicle crashes
 - Unofficial crime information





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– The measures had their limitations though

- Time periods differed
- Geographic territory differed
- Some data were official, others were preliminary



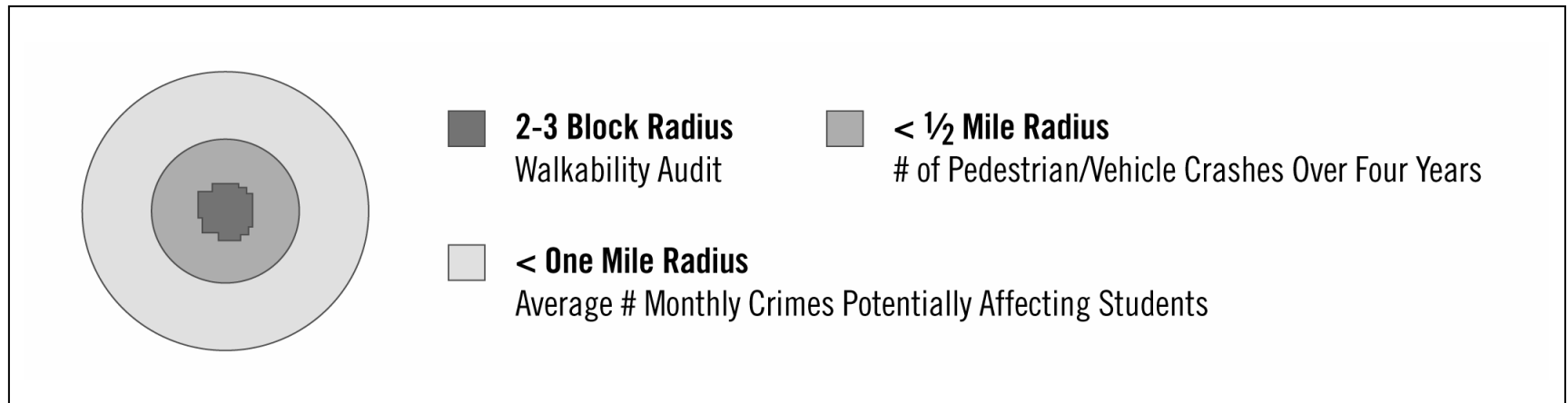
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– Time periods differed

- Pedestrian/vehicle crash data – four years of data from 1999 to 2002.
- Crime data harvested from police I-CAM website:
 - 8 months of data for each of the 8 TASK schools, from 2003 and 2004
 - 5 months of data for each of the 7 comparison schools, 2003 and 2004.
- Walkability audits at four schools conducted in late 2003 and early 2004.

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– Geographic territory differed





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- Degree of finality of police data differed.
 - Crash statistics were official CPD figures
 - Crime statistics were initial reports to CPD, subject to change
 - i.e., charges may be dropped or an assault may change to a murder charge if a victim succumbs.



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- In spite of complications with the scope and timing of the data, useful conclusions can be drawn, substantively and methodologically.



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- Focus Group Concerns
 - West Garfield Park
 - Gangs in the neighborhood (77.3%)
 - Traffic too dangerous (54.5%)
 - Uptown/Edgewater
 - Kids have to cross too many streets (61.9%)
 - Traffic too dangerous (57.1%)

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- Parent perceptions about traffic were borne out in these communities
 - Ninety percent of Chicago Public School areas experienced fewer pedestrian crashes than Goudy and Delano*
 - Median annual crashes within ½ mile of Chicago Public Schools – 22
 - Delano – 51; Our Lady of the West Side – 39; Goudy – 35; and St. Ita – 38.

*among elementary schools outside the Central Business District



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- Parent perceptions about crime were borne out in these communities
 - Average incidence of relevant (daytime, outdoor, non-domestic) crime ranged from an annualized rate of 43 to 480 at fifteen schools
 - Our Lady - 408
 - Delano - 360
 - Goudy - 300
 - St. Ita - 216



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- Parental concern about traffic crashes and crime reflect an accurate impression of actual risk for these communities.
- What nuances of difference are there between the school areas?

Measuring Community Walkability for Children West Garfield Park

- Delano - north of Eisenhower Xway;
Our Lady - south of Xway.
- African-American,
low/moderate
income.
- Blocks audited:
Delano – 12; Our
Lady - 8



Measuring Community Walkability for Children West Garfield Park

- Delano Area

- Residential streets with lower traffic volume
- Abandoned storefronts and vacant lots
- Wide commercial streets, mid-block crossings



Measuring Community Walkability for Children West Garfield Park

- Our Lady of the West Side Area
 - School embedded within residential streets
 - Zebra crossings, “roundabout”
 - Sidewalks at greater distance from street



Measuring Community Walkability for Children West Garfield Park

	Pedestrian/vehicle crashes per 100,000 (total population)	Crimes against persons (daylight, outdoor) per 100,000 (total population)
Delano Elementary 3937 W. Wilcox	431	832
Our Lady of the West Side 3900 W. Lexington	261	891

Measuring Community Walkability for Children Uptown

- Densest area in the city, multicultural.
- High commercial occupancy, high vehicle and pedestrian volumes
- Blocks audited:
Goudy – 10; St. Ita – 10



Measuring Community Walkability for Children Uptown

- Goudy Area
 - School is on but separated from Foster
 - Narrower streets with longer walk signals
 - Adequate to generous sidewalks, usually three or more feet from street



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Measuring Community Walkability for Children Uptown

- St. Ita Area
 - Predominantly multi-family residential
 - High aesthetics: tree coverage, gardens and landscaped parkways.
 - The only three-street intersection in study



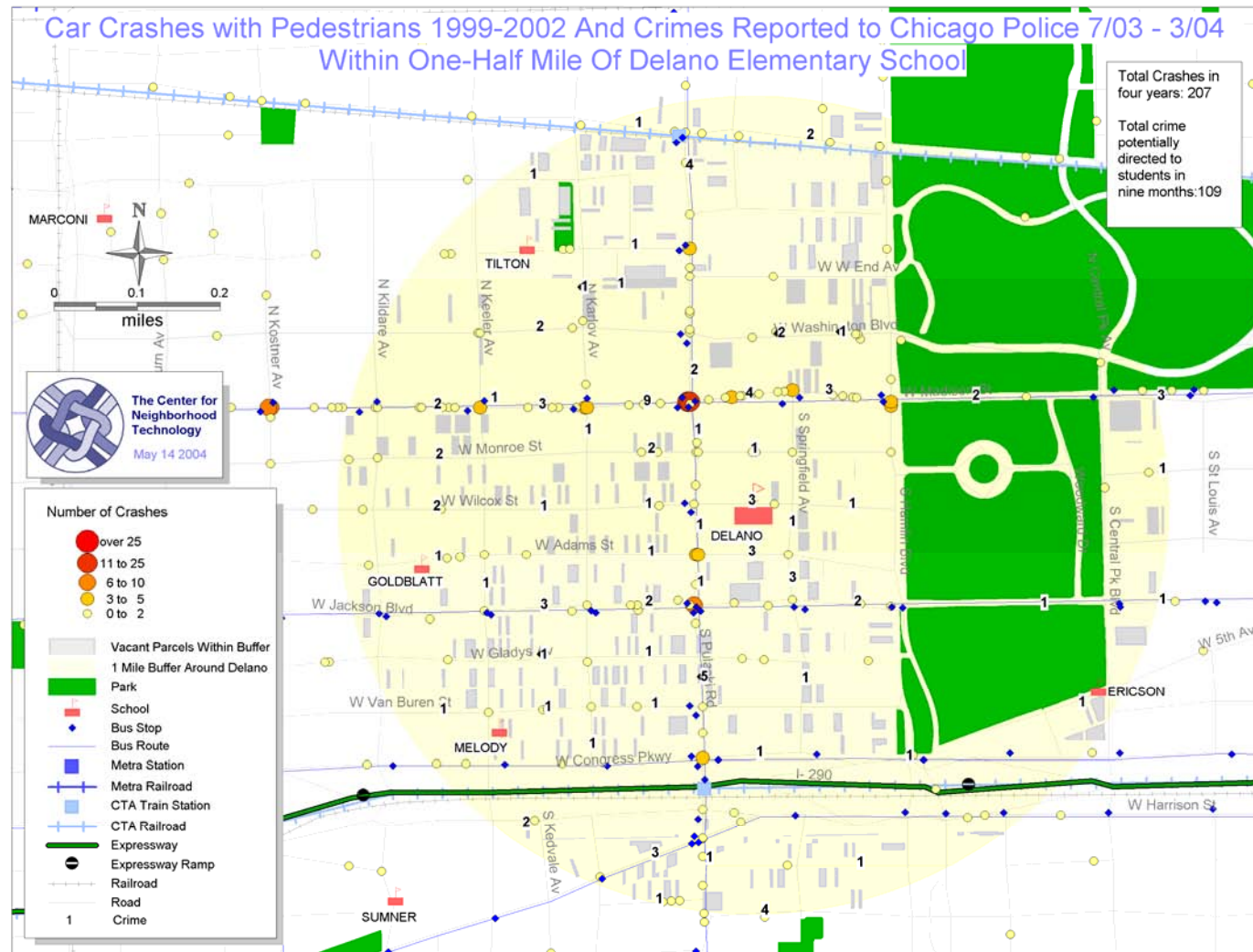
Measuring Community Walkability for Children Uptown

	Pedestrian/vehicle crashes per 100,000 (total population)	Crimes against persons (daylight, outdoor) per 100,000 (total population)
Goudy Elementary 5120 N. Winthrop	133	355
St. Ita Religious Education Center 5525 N. Magnolia	130	259

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- Preliminary conclusions
 - Parental perceptions of danger are realistic
 - W. Garfield Park emphasis on both traffic and crime is realistic
 - SCRIPTS data show hospitalizations for both Bike/Ped Injury and Firearm Assault are very high in WGP, with firearm hospitalization twice as likely as traffic hospitalization
 - Uptown emphasis on traffic risk is realistic
 - SCRIPTS data show likelihood of hospitalization for traffic injury is twice as high as firearm assault

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- Useful conclusions can be drawn from the methodology. Modifications should include:
 - Use consistent, official crime/crash data with same perimeter
 - Use attendance boundary maps to select audit streets
 - Time traffic/pedestrian counts electronically
 - Select control schools with low crime & crash exposure for comparison



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- Thanks
 - To CLOCC for the opportunity to do the study
 - And to you for being our preview audience