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Atlanta Community Schoolyards A project of the 10-Minute Walk Campaign



An Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel July-August 2020

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With over 1,400 members throughout the Atlanta region (Georgia, Alabama & Eastern Tennessee), ULI Atlanta is one of the largest and most active ULI District Councils worldwide. We bring together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs. We share knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, electronic media, events and programs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute has harnessed the technical expertise of its members to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the Atlanta Region. Drawing from our seasoned professional membership base, ULI Atlanta offers objective and responsible guidance on a variety of land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions.

About the 10-Minute Walk Campaign

The 10-Minute Walk Campaign is a nationwide movement launched in October 2017 to ensure that there is a great park within a tenminute walk of every person, in every neighborhood, in every city across the United States. Learn more and connect with 10 Minute Walk at 10minutewalk.org and uli.org/parks.

About Atlanta Community Schoolyards

Reimagining community schoolyards is one proven strategy designed to help cities reach the goal of having every resident live within a 10-Minute Walk of a park. While access to parks in Atlanta continues to improve, 29 percent of residents do not live within a 10-minute walk of a park. The Atlanta Community Schoolyards program aims to improve that number by reimagining schoolyards for public use during non-school hours. ULI Atlanta has partnered with the Trust for Public Land and Park Pride to pilot this project with two Atlanta Public Schools.



In partnership with





THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND



Acknowledgements

The Urban Land Institute would like to thank the ULI Atlanta member volunteers who have spent countless hours leading this project to advance the goals of the 10-Minute Walk Campaign in Atlanta. This project could not have been completed without them. A special *thank you* goes to:

- Janet Bozeman, Hyatt & Stubblefield
- Steve Foster, Georgia Power

- Lauren Standish, HGOR
- Daphne Bond-Godfrey, ULI Atlanta (project staff)
- Alex Heaton, Morris, Manning, & Martin

Finally, a special thank you to Georgia Power for the data and technology partnership in producing this report.

Table of Contents

Introduction:1	.0-Minute Walk Campaign and Atlanta Community Schoolyards1
ULI Atlanta's V	Valk Analysis Assignment
Lenora P. Mile	es Elementary School
Summ	ary of Safe Routes to Parks Audit 5
Recon	nmendations6
Conclu	isions6
Appendices	
Appendix A:	Route Map of Lenora P. Miles Elementary School10
Appendix B:	Detailed Demographic Information on the School 11
Appendix C:	Detailed Walk Assessment Spreadsheet for Lenora P. Miles Elementary School12
Appendix D:	Safe Routes to Parks Walk Audit Checklists14



Introduction: 10-Minute Walk Campaign and Atlanta Community Schoolyards

What is the 10-Minute Walk Campaign?

The 10-Minute Walk Campaign is a nationwide movement launched in October 2017 to improve access to parks and green spaces for every person, in every neighborhood, in every city across the United States.

Research shows that one in three Americans—more than 100 million people—do not have a park within a 10-minute walk of their home. To address this issue, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) has partnered with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) to advance the goals of the 10-Minute Walk Campaign across the nation. Studies have shown that increasing park access helps to transform local communities and improves the physical, social, environmental, and economic health of people who call those communities home.

As of this writing, the 10-Minute Walk Campaign has been endorsed by more than 220 U.S. mayors across the political spectrum and from cities large and small. These civic leaders are committed to improving park access in their respective cities. In Atlanta, former Mayor Reed pledged to make Atlanta a 10-Minute Walk city and Mayor Bottoms has followed suit. The Atlanta Community Schoolyards initiative is a powerful approach to help achieve these goals city-wide.

Atlanta Community Schoolyards

In partnership with TPL, Park Pride, and APS, ULI Atlanta is advancing the 10-Minute Walk Campaign goals by repositioning schoolyards as parks and thus a new resource for increasing park access for Atlanta's residents. In this model, APS schoolyards would be open to the public after school hours, during the summer months, and on weekends.

Walkability, mobility, and greenspace are key factors in advancing inclusive, welcoming, and sustainable communities. Walkability adds value to a community, allowing children to walk to school safely and adults to transit stops and stations and provides options for recreation and social engagement. Through the Atlanta Community Schoolyards project, ULI Atlanta members are identifying and evaluating all mobility options surrounding ten school sites with a keen focus on walkability – sidewalk infrastructure and street crossings. The aspiration goal is to increase safe access to the schoolyards and expand access to parks and greenspace.

What's next

Following the walkability assessments related to Atlanta Community Schoolyards reports, schoolchildren and residents from the surrounding communities will design improvements to their communities' schoolyard. Construction will soon follow, bringing those designs to life, creating inviting, accessible, and safe spaces for school-day play and after-hours recreation for school children and the surrounding community.

ULI Atlanta's Walk Analysis Assignment

In order to understand the present walking conditions surrounding the four school sites selected for evaluation this year, ULI Atlanta conducted walk analyses within a half-mile radius of each school, generally representing the distance that an average adult can walk in ten minutes. Those subject schools for this phase include:

- Centennial Academy
- Harper-Archer Elementary School
- Miles Elementary School
- Sarah Smith Elementary School (Primary Campus)

Each school selected represents a broad cross-section of APS school clusters and geographic diversity within the city (with schools in the north, south, east, and west). The information collected and related analysis by the ULI Atlanta team will serve as the foundation for the improvements needed to achieve the goals of the 10-Minute Walk Campaign in each school community – a walk that Jeff Speck author of *Walkable City* describes as useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting. The challenge for the Atlanta region is to find ways to create more walkable environments that incorporate these four key principles, which are simple in concept but challenging in execution.

The information collected and related analysis by the ULI Atlanta team will serve as the foundation for the improvements needed to achieve the goals of the 10-Minute Walk Campaign in each school community.

ULI's member volunteers set out to assess and document the current conditions of the sidewalks, crosswalks, and general safety within a half-mile radius of the subject schools. Specifically, the following three questions were posed for each site:

- What is the current nature of a 10-minute walk around the school?
- Which needed improvements are currently funded and/or are there existing plans that be leveraged to address those improvements?
- What additional improvements are needed to make a desirable and effective 10-minute walk?

The first step in answering these questions was to gather information about the communities surrounding each school. Demographic information provided the team with key statistics relating to population density and number of school-aged children and families. Regarding the physical environment, the team compiled and reviewed maps, physical conditions and constraints, and land use information for the study areas. Georgia Power provided spatial data and additional demographic information, which allowed the team to begin the walk analysis assessment fully informed.

With the demographic and physical environment data in hand, ULI Atlanta volunteers walked each of the routes to each school within a 10-minute walk and analyzed site conditions along the way utilizing a standard evaluation matrix designed expressly for this purpose.

Each assessment began with a project briefing for each walking team by the ULI Atlanta steering committee. This briefing included an overview of the study area, identified the specific streets to evaluate, and reviewed the survey questions each walking team must address. Teams were then organized around walk segments or quadrants depending on the street grid patterns and set out to personally walk each segment of the study area.

The evaluations addressed each of the following characteristics:

- Existence of sidewalks
- Condition of sidewalks
- Existence of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramps at crossings
- Presence of pedestrian walk lights
- Visibility ahead, behind, and around pedestrians
- Presence of sudden drop offs, holes, or other safety hazards/ barriers
- Slope of road and impact on ease of walk
- Existence of trees for shade
- Presence of litter
- Feeling of personal safety



The teams used a standard rating schedule (A-B-C-D-F) to classify the following attributes of each walk segment:

- Presence of sidewalks
- Condition(s) of sidewalk: solid surface + width
- Compliance with ADA
- Access to residential areas
- Presence of unique features

The A-B-C-D-F classification represented the following scale:

- A Excellent (There is a continuous, usable sidewalk for the entirety of the walk)
- B Little improvement needed (*There is a continuous, usable sidewalk for the majority the walk*)
- C Significant improvement needed (The sidewalk is not continuous for the majority of the walk)
- D Major improvement needed (*The sidewalk is cracked and broken or not present, with significant accessibility challenges and ADA compliance issues*)
- F Failed (The sidewalk is non-existent and/or completely unusable)



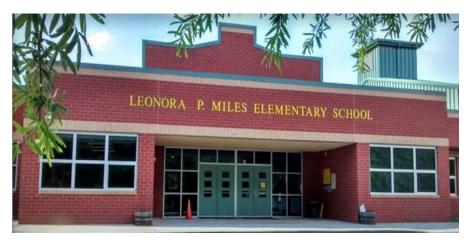
Figure 1 - ULI staff and member volunteers walking the school site with Miles Elementary administration and the Trust for Public Land.

Lenora P. Miles Elementary School

Background

Leonora Precious Miles Elementary School (Miles Elementary) was founded in 1907 by the Bethlehem Methodist Church as Bethlehem Church School. The school initially served the Adamsville and Boulder Park communities, which were incorporated into the City of Atlanta in 1966 through annexation. Miles Elementary was the first school in the area for African American students and served 73 students in its first year.

In the 1980's the school underwent a complete reconstruction and is in good condition today. The school sits on an attractive lot and is



Miles Elementary School image obtained via Google.com

accessible via Corina Lane. The school campus features a large multi-purpose field and several multi-purpose recreational courts at the northern end of the property. The campus is surrounded by woods and, aside from a small residential development to the east, is rather isolated with no other mobility connections aside from Corina lane.

Miles Elementary serves children in pre-K to fifth grade, and 93% of the 647 children enrolled are African American, a statistic that closely aligns with the demographics of the Adamsville neighborhood. In addition to the significant African American population at the school, 5% of the children are Hispanic and the remaining 2% are a mix of races. All students reside in households that are considered low-income and 100% of the students qualify for the school lunch program. Neighborhood Demographics (a map of the study area is provided as Appendix A)

Neighborhood Demographics

- Population of the study area: 114
- Median age: 39
- Housing units in the study area: 51
- Average household size: 2.33
- Median household income: \$40,720
- Median house price: \$90,625
- Owner-occupied housing: 70% (this number and exceeds the City of Atlanta and the State of Georgia)
- Rental housing: 25%

A more detailed demographic report may be found in Appendix B.





Figure 2 - Image of school drive as pictured from school parking lot. Proposed improvements and passive park would be placed on the left side of this image in the wooded area.

Summary of Safe Routes to Parks Walk Audit

Miles Elementary is located at 4215 Bakers Ferry Road in southwest Atlanta. Bakers Ferry Road is a low-volume, two-lane road connecting Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to Fulton Industrial Boulevard. Bakers Ferry Road primarily serves residential neighborhoods along its entire length and is the only road providing access to Miles Elementary via Corina Lane. For the one-mile section included in the study area, Baker Ferry Road has sidewalks and curbs on one side of the road only. The ULI Atlanta team gave Baker Ferry Road a B rating, as the route requires minor repairs and has issues with obstructions on the sidewalks.

The ULI Atlanta team investigated 13 other streets within a 10-minute walk of the school. Three of these streets do not have sidewalks and were thus classified as a F rating. Twelve of the streets are low-volume neighborhood streets with sidewalks that earned either A or B ratings. Dollar Mill Road, which is subject to more traffic volume, does not have sidewalks. As Dollar Mill Road does not have residences lining the route within the study area, it is not of primary concern in this evaluation.

All roads within the study area appear to be in good condition. Bakers Ferry Road, the only major route to the school, is well-striped and has good signage and lights relating to the school zone. The ULI Atlanta team did find evidence of illegal trash dumping in a few locations along Bakers Ferry Road, however, and there are few people in the area to provide a sense of community and safety. Despite these two challenges, the area does not feel unsafe.

The residential neighborhoods surrounding Miles Elementary are suburban in nature and feature low-volume roads with sidewalks in good condition on one or both sides of the street. While one subdivision did not have sidewalks, such additional walking infrastructure may not be required given the low number of houses within the study area. The neighborhoods were clean and often had residents present, leading to a feeling of safety while walking.

Proposed capital improvements to the school campus along the east side of Corina Lane include a new passive park, which will be accessible via a continuous sidewalk connection from Bakers Ferry.

The detailed walk assessment may be found in Appendix C.



Figure 3 - Google Earth Image illustrating possible opportunities alongside the North and West quadrants of Miles Elementary where there is vacant land that could be developed and future connections to school site could be considered at that time.

Recommendations

Since the focus of the recommendations are on the existing conditions within the study area, there are opportunities for minor maintenance and debris removal and sidewalk repairs. Unfortunately, the study area has limited opportunities to leverage community connections due to current land use patterns. However, there are opportunities alongside the North and West quadrants adjacent to Miles Elementary where there is vacant land that could be developed and future connections to school site could be considered at that time. The proposed capital improvements at the school site will be on the east side of the entrance along a narrow patch of wooded area leading to the school. Accessibility to this new passive park area is very good, with continuous sidewalk connection from Bakers Ferry.

Conclusion

Given the existing conditions and land use patterns in the study area, the ULI Atlanta team did not identify any critical infrastructure needs to be addressed for the Miles Elementary Schoolyards study. While future growth in around the campus might change this assessment, the current 10-minute walk options for the school is comfortable and viewed as safe. Some minor maintenance and removal of debris is all that is required to further improve the Miles Elementary 10-minute walk experience.



In 2019, ULI Atlanta documented the walking conditi ons within a 10-minute walk of <u>Dobbs Elementary</u> and <u>Kimberly Elementary</u> schools.

The project has been featured in a number of local and national media outlets on demonstrating the feasibility of using schoolyards as shared public spaces.

Dobbs, Kimberly Elementary schools selected for 'Community Schoolyards' pilot program (The Atlanta Voice) <u>https://www.the-atlantavoice.com/articles/dobbs-kimberly-elementary-schools-selected-for-community-schoolyards-pilot-program/</u>

2 Atlanta schoolyards to be public parks; eight more to come (AJC) <u>https://www.ajc.com/news/local/atlanta-schoolyards-public-parks-eight-more-come/RHpYPsJW44FWYDjdki3ovM/</u>

Communities looking at schoolyards in new way (CBS 46) <u>http://www.cbs46.com/news/communities-looking-at-schoolyards-in-new-way/article_215250e4-e963-11ea-a1c9-ab795a23647b.html</u>

COVID-19 — is everyone receiving the benefits of urban parks equally? (The Hill) <u>https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-</u> environment/513744-covid-19-is-everyone-receiving-the-benefits-of-urban-parks-equally_

Atlanta's Schoolyards to Become After-Hours Green Space (Next City) <u>https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/atlantas-schoolyards-to-</u> become-after-hours-green-space

A playground turnaround for Atlanta Public Schools <u>https://atlanta.uli.org/a-playground-turnaround-for-atlanta-public-schools/</u>



Building Healthy Corridors Typology¹

A primary activity of ULI's Healthy Corridors project was to define a healthy corridor and identify the components that make up a holistically healthy corridor and its surrounding area. A healthy corridor has land uses and services that allow residents and visitors to make healthy lifestyle choices more easily. A healthy corridor is a place that reflects the culture of the community, promotes social cohesion, inspires and facilitates healthy eating and active living, provides and connects to a variety of economic and educational opportunities and housing and transportation choices, and adapts to the needs and concerns of residents.

Improved	» Frequent, safe, and well-marked pedestrian crossings								
infrastructure	» Safe and well-marked bike lanes								
	» Traffic speeds that accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and other users								
	» Reduced traffic congestion								
	» Utility lines and traffic signs and signals that are underground or that blend in								
	» Sidewalks that link adjacent neighborhoods to the corridor and that are unobstructed, wide enough for a variety of users, and buffered from the street								
	» Streetscapes that include amenities for visual interest and safety, including seating, trees for shade, and green buffers								
	» Lighting that improves visibility and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists								
	» Features that improve accessibility for all types of users, in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act standards								
Design and land	» Vibrant retail environment								
use patterns that support	» Housing options for all income levels								
community needs	» Buildings adjacent or proximate to sidewalks								
	» Improved parking strategies and shared parking								
	» High-quality parks and public spaces								
	» Healthy food options								
Engaged and	» Engaged residents and local business owners								
supported people	» Organizations that facilitate long-term improvements and resident engagement								
who live, work, and travel along	» Regular programs in community gathering spaces								
the corridor	» Accommodations for pets								
	» Accommodations for vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities								
	» A defined identity, drawing on the arts and culture of the community and supported by creative placemaking programming								
	» Measures to address safety and perceptions of safety								
Linkages to other	» Well-connected, multimodal street networks								
parts of the city	» Safe and easily identifiable connections, including sidewalks and trails								
	» Transit, including enhanced bus service or rail								
	» Bike infrastructure on or adjacent to the corridor								

¹ Building Healthy Corridors: Transforming Urban and Suburban Arterials into Thriving Places. Urban Land Institute (2016).

https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Building-Healthy-Corridors-ULI.pdf

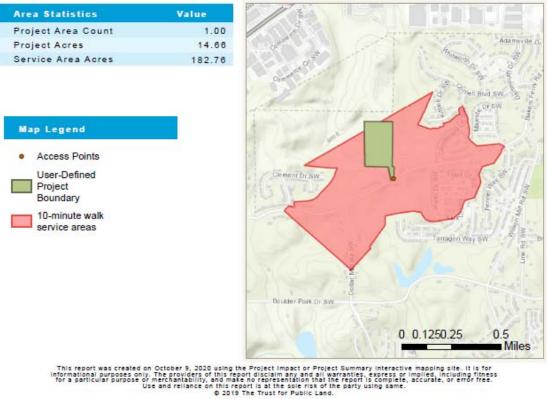
Appendices



Appendix A - Route Map of Lenora P. Miles Elementary School

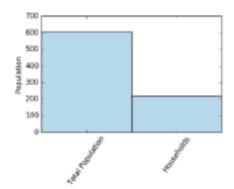


For TPL staff only: Acres listed for Land Protection Projects are official from Finance, while Park Development Project acres are estimated based on GIS calculations.



Appendix B - Detailed Demographic Information on the School

Population	Served
Total Population	606
Households	218

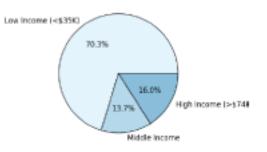


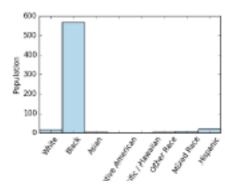
	Children (<20) 24.8%
Adults 55.9%	19.3% Seniors (>64)

Age	Served	Percent
Children (less than age 20)	150	24.75
Adults (age 20 to age 64)	338	55.78
Seniors (age 65 and up)	117	19.31

Income	Served	Percent
Low (less than \$35,000)	154	70.64
Middle (from \$35,000 to \$75,000)	30	13.76
High (\$75,000 and up)	35	16.06

Race/Ethnicity	Served	Percent
White	18	2.97
Black	568	93.73
Aslan	4	0.66
Native American	1	0.17
Pacific / Hawallan	0	0.00
Other Race	5	0.83
Mixed Race	8	1.32
Hispanic *	20	3.30







Appendix C: Detailed Walk Assessment Spreadsheet for Lenora P. Miles Elementary School

									Atla	anta	Commu	nity Scho	oyeards - 2020
					Lenora P. Miles Elemer						ntary School		
Main / Minor	Street	From Intersection	To Intersection	Distance Miles	Walk Duration Minutes	Total Intersections	Total Cross Walks	Speed Limit	Marta Stops	GDOT Traffic Count	Side Walk Y/N	1. Side Walk Rating	1. Side Walk Comment
Major	Bakers Ferry Road SW	South West Boundary	Corina Lane	0.4	7	1	0	35	0	2610	Y	в	One side only Sidewalks blocked by debris, Some cracks and obstructions Some trip hazards
Minor	Dollar Mill Drive	Bakers Ferry Road SW	South Boundary	0.1	2	1	1	35	0		N	F	No Sidewalks in study area
	Bakers Ferry Road SW	Corina Lane	East Boundary	0.4	7	2	0	35	1	2610	Y	в	Sidewalks blocked by debris, Some cracks and obstructions Some trip hazards
	Corina Lane	Bakers Ferry Road SW	School	0.2	3	1	1	25	0		Y	A	Sidewalk on one side in good repair
Minor	WoodlPark Park Drive	Bakers Ferry Road SW	End	0.2	5	1	1	NP	0		Y	А	New Sidewalks on both sides of street
Minor	WoodlPark ParkWay	WoodlPark Park Drive	End	0.1	2	1	1	NP	0		Y	А	New Sidewalks on both sides of street
Minor	Candlelight Lane	Bakers Ferry Road SW	North Boundary	0.2	4	2	1	NP	0		N	F	No Sidewalks in study area
Minor	Renfew Court	Candlelight Lane	End	0.1	2	1	1	NP	0		Y	F	No Sidewalks in study area
Minor	Waits Drive	Bakers Ferry Road SW	South Boundary	0.2	3	5	1	25	2		Y	A-	Discontinous on one side
Minor	Ester Drive	Waits Drive	East Boundary	0.1	3	1	1	25	0		Y	A	Sidewalks both sides of street
Minor	Doster Street	Waits Drive	East Boundary	0.1	2	1	1	25	0		Y	A	Sidewalks both sides of street
Minor	Codel Street	Waits Drive	East Boundary	0.1	2	1	1	25	0		Y	А	Sidewalks both sides of street
Minor	Brewer Drive	Waits Drive	East Boundary	0.05	1	1		25	0		Y	A	Sidewalks both sides of street

Walk Assessment Conducted 08/22/2020 8:30 am - 10:30 am									
2. St. Crsng & Intersect	2. Street Crossing & Intersection Commets	3. Safety Rating	3. Safety Comments	4. Comfort rating	4. Comfort Comment 2	5. Over All Rating			
	School zone signs and lights prominent	or our city nating	Some dumping present, Few eyes on street	- in control runny					
А		В		A		В			
А	No crossing at intersection	A	Few eyes on street	A		В			
	School zone signs and lights prominent		Some dumping present, Few eyes on street						
A		В		A		В			
	Crossing at Bakers Ferry well marked School Walk signs present, ADA compliat corners								
Α		A		A	New subdivision, no mature trees	A			
А		А		А		А			
А		A		A	New subdivision, no mature trees	A			
А		А		A		A			
А		А		A		A			
A-	Crossings in neighborhood not marked	А		А		А			
A-	Crossings in neighborhood not marked	A		A	Not enough shade	A			
A-	Crossings in neighborhood not marked	А		А	Not enough shade	A			
A-	Crossings in neighborhood not marked	А		A	Not enough shade	А			
A-	Crossings in neighborhood not marked	A		A	Not enough shade	A			

Technical Assistance Program

Atlanta Community Schoolyards - 2020

Time of Audit: _____

Walker(s):

ban Land Atlanta

Street Name: _

Directions: Fill out the checklist to note problems on the route to your park. You may use the checklist either for each block you walk, or for your entire route. Place an 'X' next to any problem for people walking and note the location of the problem on your map. Note: photos can be a helpful reminder of the conditions identified during the walk.

Reminders: Make sure while you're conducting your walk audit you keep in mind different perspectives (for example, kids, seniors, people of color, low-income individuals, working people, and people with disabilities). Without these perspectives, you may miss needs that are present in the community.

Other problems: Sidewalks 1. No sidewalks or paths Sidewalks are blocked by overgrown landscaping, poles, signs, plants, vehicles, etc. Sidewalk is not continuous *If a sidewalk is not present, is there another safe place to walk (unpaved path, street or shoulder)? Specify: Sidewalks are broken, cracked or have trip hazards Overall, the quality and safety of sidewalk is: С Α B D There are no pedestrian crossing signals **Street Crossings & Intersections** There is no crosswalk, or it is poorly marked Intersection does not have a curb ramp for carts, wheelchairs, Other problems: strollers, walkers, etc. Overall, the quality and safety of street crossings & intersections is: С D Α B Safety Car speeds are too fast There's too much traffic Streetlights are few or not present My personal safety feels threatened along the walk, including There is a lack of eyes on the street (e.g. absence of people, no seeing or experiencing street harassment houses or store fronts). Other problems: Overall, the feeling of safety in this area is: Α R D 4. Comfort There is not enough shade from canopies, awnings, or trees Other problems: There are steep slopes The street needs benches and places to rest Overall, the comfort and appeal in this area is: D

Adapted from "Taking Steps Toward Equitable, Safe Park Access: A Toolkit for Planning and Conducting a Safe Routes to Parks Walk Audit" by the Safe Routes to School National Partnership (2018).

https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/safe_routes_to_parks_walk_audit_toolkit.pdf

