

Creating Diverse, Walkable Schools

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Public Health Law & Policy

**We partner with state and local leaders
to improve health in communities.**

**We research legal and policy questions, draft laws
and policies, and train community leaders to put
these ideas to work.**



Good school siting is important for health, but:

Is there tension between walkability and diversity?



Initial research showed:

Many analyses existed of separate issues, but few or none brought them together.

So...



Quick snapshot of what we found



Our approach

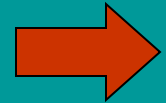
Key informant interviews

Literature reviews

Legal analysis

Case studies

State policies and educational trends



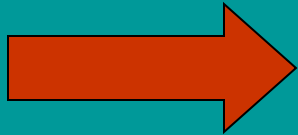
Bigger
schools



On the outskirts of town



City policies and development trends

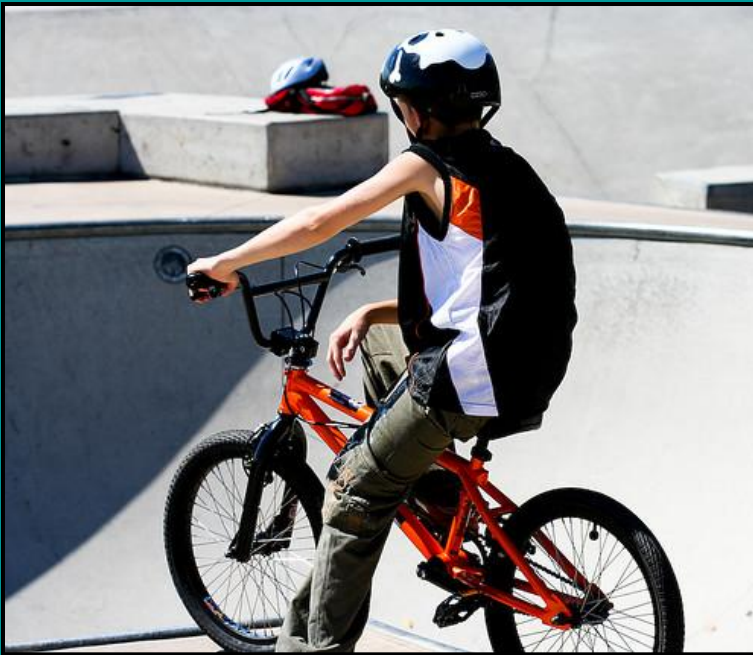


Sprawling
development



The Result:

Fewer and fewer kids live near their schools



Children living within a mile of school:

- *1969: 45%*
- *Now: 21%*

Poor school siting = less physical activity = poorer health

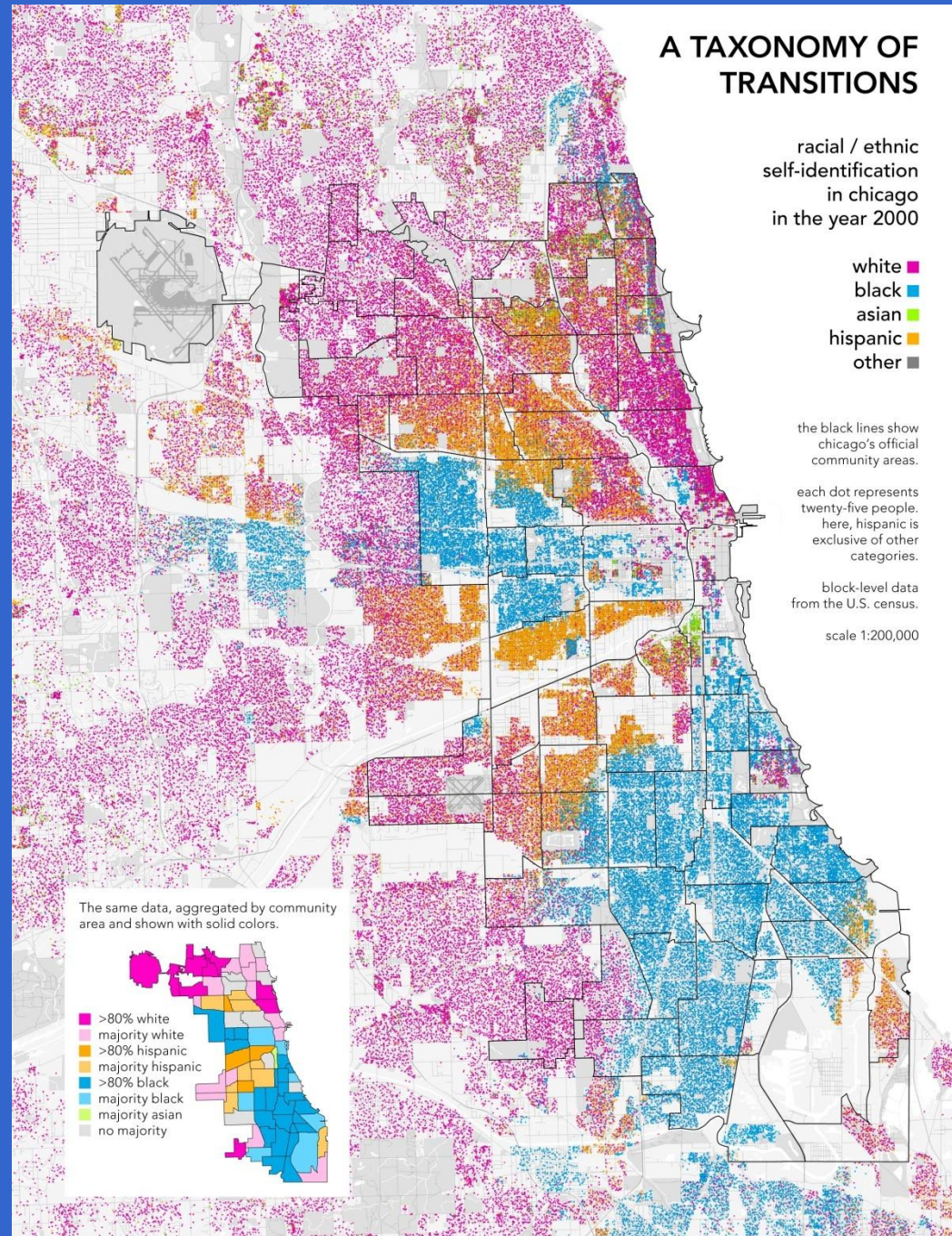
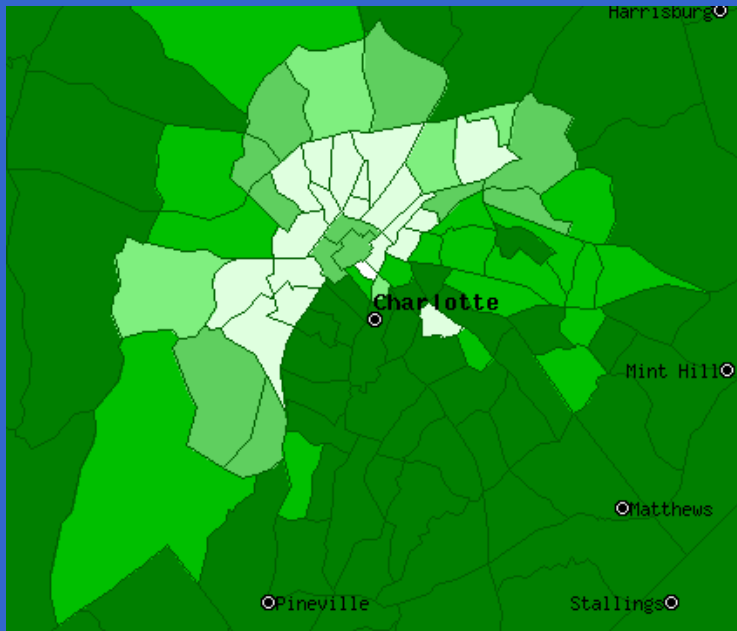
Children who walk or bike to school:

- *1969: 50%*
- *Now: 14%*



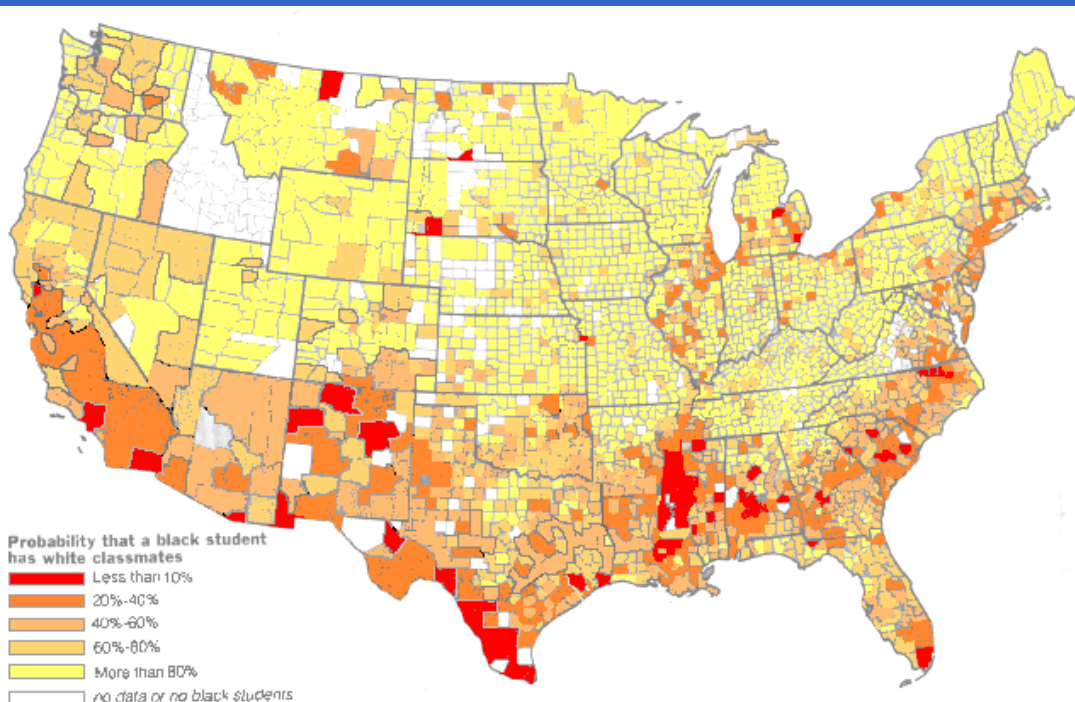
Economic and racial diversity

Our neighborhoods are still highly racially segregated



Children are even more segregated

- In neighborhoods
- In schools: segregation has increased since the late 1980s



Conclusion

Without countermeasures,
neighborhood schools likely to
increase segregation



Why does it matter?

Diverse schools:

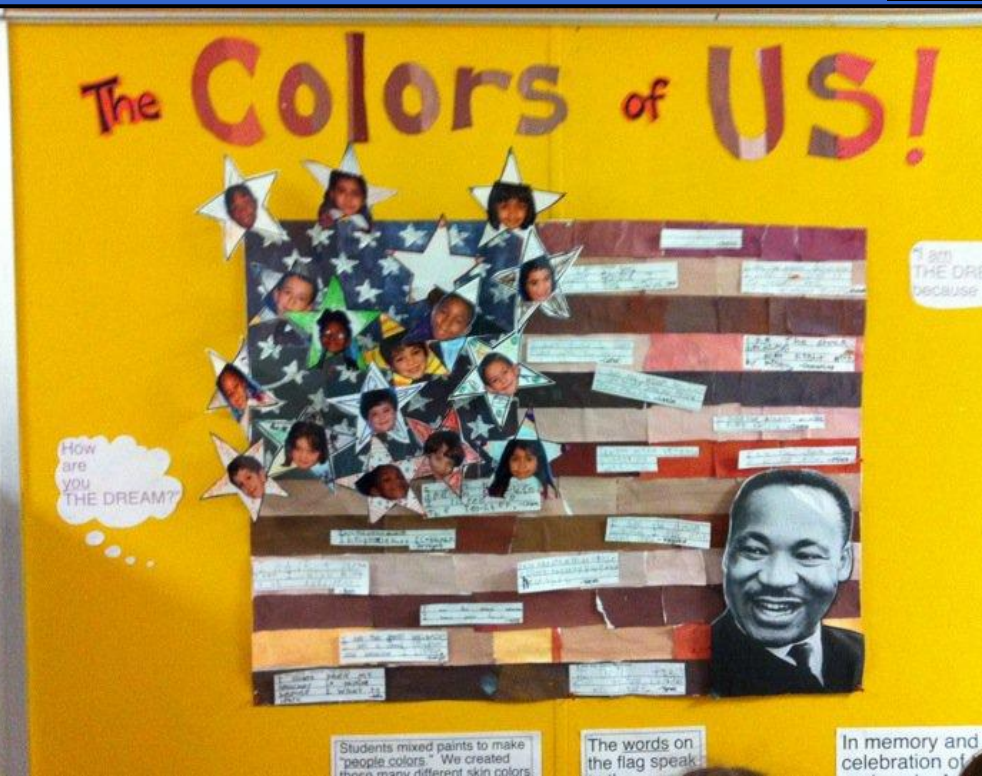
- Decrease feelings of racial superiority
- Yield adults who live and work in integrated settings
- Improve academic performance



Next question: What to do?



Starting point



Health and diversity are both core values.

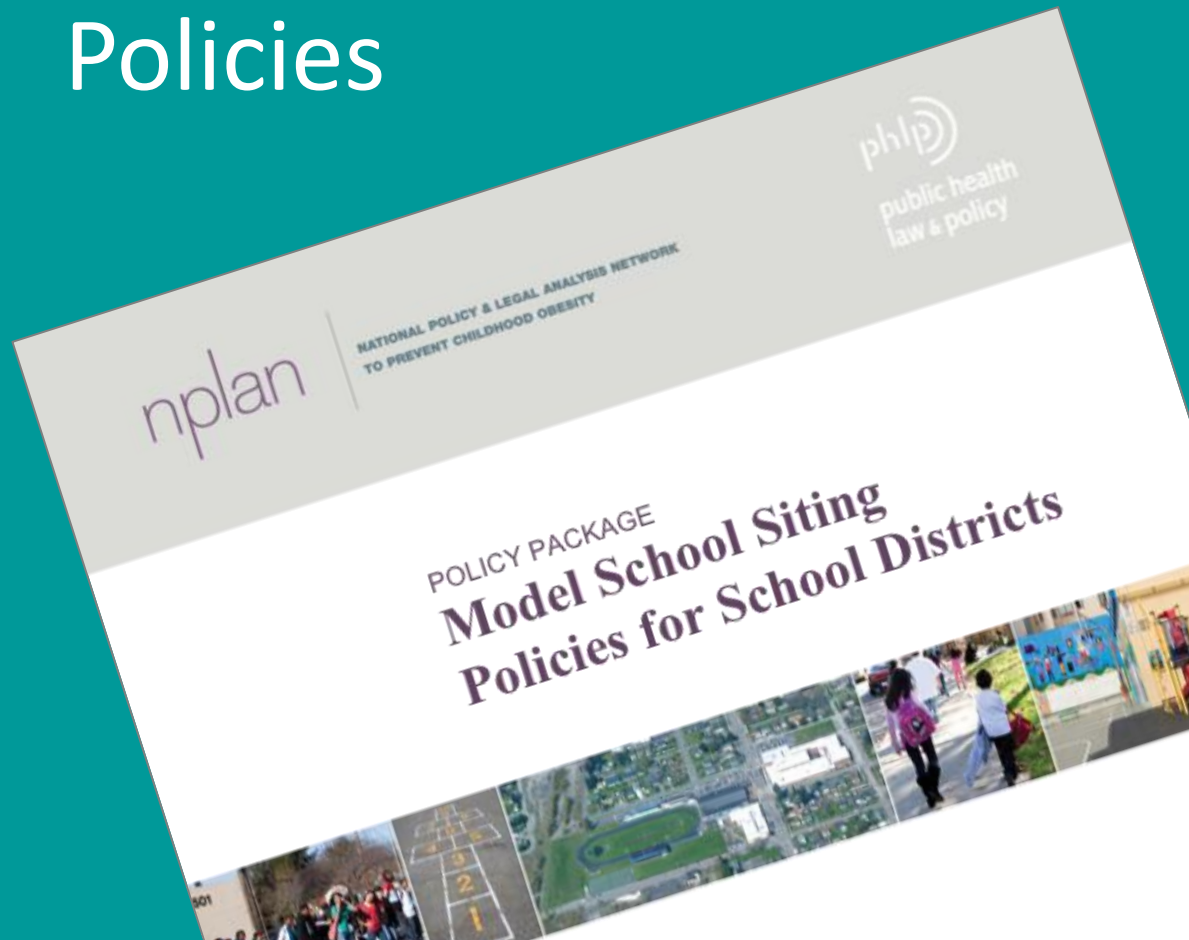
Big Picture Strategies

1. Address residential segregation
2. Prioritize walkability and diversity in school location decisions
3. Design student assignment policies to maximize walkability and diversity
4. Support walkability and bikability

- Short term strategies
- Long term strategies



PHLP Model School District Siting Policies



Focus on Diversity and Walkability

- General principles
- Siting criteria
- Policies regarding attendance zones and assignment



- **Have safe routes:** A site with safe routes has a surrounding neighborhood or area with safe and convenient facilities for walking and bicycling to school. Safe routes for walking require continuous sidewalks, frequent safe street crossings, and few or no wide streets with vehicle speeds in excess of 35 mph. Safe routes for bicycling require bike paths, bike lanes, or narrow streets with low traffic volume and low speeds. District will seek to avoid locating schools near highways, railroad tracks, or other barriers that significantly impede safe travel.

COMMENT: As noted above, the Active School Neighborhood Checklist provides a user-friendly, methodical way to assess a school location's supportiveness for walking and bicycling.²⁸

- **Support racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity:** District shall also prioritize sites that support student racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity through proximity to one or more residential areas that cumulatively reflect the diversity of the larger community.

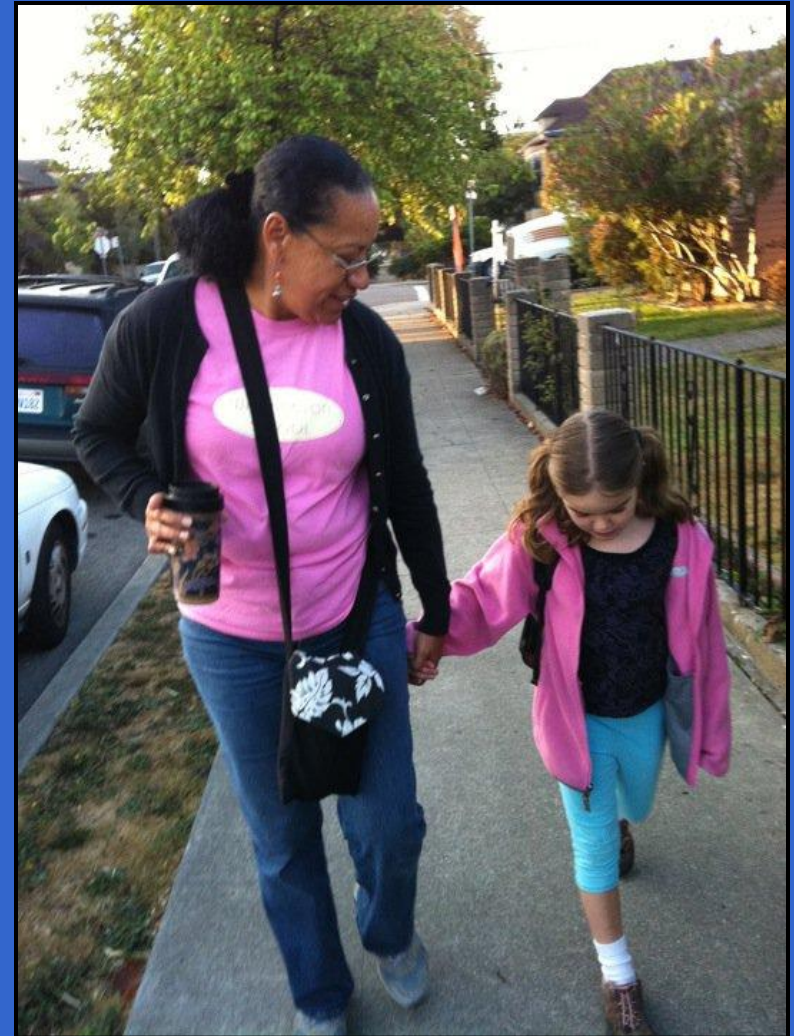
Board Policy [F6]: Attendance Zones & Assignment Policies

COMMENT: Districts often divide students living within a school district into attendance zones. The zones can be redrawn (known as "redistricting") with varying goals in mind, such as decreasing transportation times for students or promoting integration. Because attendance zones and student assignment policies have a significant effect on the ability of students to walk or bicycle to school, as well as the diversity of the school, districts should consider using these tools to promote both of these goals.

In engaging in school siting determinations, District shall evaluate existing attendance zones and assignment policies with the goal of creating schools that are walkable and bikable and also reflect the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of District's community.

Future areas of research

- Analyze **model districts**
- Evaluate effects of siting or assignment **policy changes**
- Analyze **typologies** of development and segregation patterns in different size communities
- Identify **siting strategies** that can maximize diversity & walkability for **different typologies**



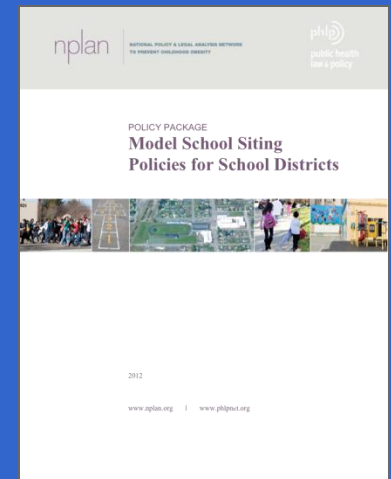
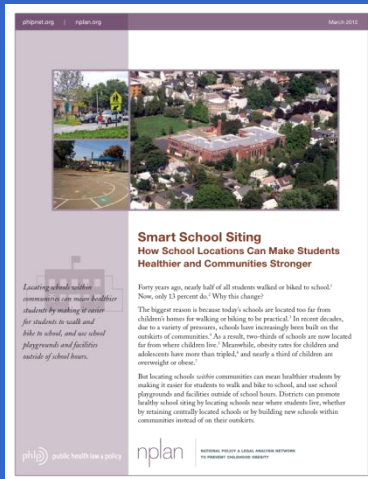
The Vision: Vibrant, Diverse Community Centered Schools

- Located close to families and residents
- Integrated into the heart of community activities
- Representing and educating whole community



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www.nplanonline.org/nplan/healthy-school-siting

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