



Cassell Park Elementary Built Environment Summary

March 2024 | Independence, Missouri



Children's Mercy
KANSAS CITY



Introduction

BikeWalkKC is the Kansas City metro's active transportation advocacy organization. **Our mission is to redefine our streets as places for people to build a culture of active living.** We accomplish this with our robust advocacy efforts, community planning presence, comprehensive adult and youth education programs and locally operated bike share programs.



Education Programming

Since **2019**, BikeWalkKC has had the honor of partnering with **Cassell Park Elementary** to provide pedestrian and bicycle education to staff and students. Over the years we have accomplished the following with the school's support:

- Served **370** students
- Taught **31** students how to ride a bike



The images above show a BikeWalkKC bicycle fleet as well as students learning helmet fitting and how to ride in two-way traffic during a BLAST (Bike Lessons and Safety Training) program.

Components

BikeWalkKC's youth safety programs are primarily supported by federal funding and supplemented by other financial sources. In 2023, BikeWalkKC was awarded a Catalyst Community Partnership Grant from Children's Mercy. The grant seeks to support organizations that work to improve children's health and well-being across the Kansas City area.

Cassell Park Elementary is located in a priority health area identified in the Housing & Neighborhood Conditions section of the Children's Mercy 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment. The grant allows BikeWalkKC to provide the following additional services at no cost to the school:

- A **built environment assessment** of the immediate neighborhood in order to identify the extent to which the built environment promotes or prohibits the ability of students and families to safely walk and bike to school. We are evaluating components such as sidewalks, street conditions, intersections, etc.
- A summary report with **recommendations for improvements**, if necessary.



Highlights of the Built Environment Assessment

Cassell Park is a recently renovated school. The sidewalks along S Hardy Avenue to where they meet E 33rd Terrace are in good condition. However, they are only on one side of the street. There is a buffer between the sidewalk and street but the buffer unfortunately ends where the sidewalk goes in front of the school along S Hardy Avenue.

The sidewalk along E 31st Street is wide and new and also features a buffer. Unfortunately, when this sidewalk goes off of school property, it ends abruptly and then there are no sidewalks on either side of the street.

Many of the neighborhoods around the school have no sidewalks at all. If they are present, they are usually only on one side of the street. Walking along E 31st Street is very dangerous because there are no curb and gutters, rather there is a grassy ditch on either side of the road. Drivers along E 31st Street were driving fast and seemed distracted. Drivers along this section of S Hardy Avenue seemed to drive a little more calm and were yielding to pedestrians.



This image above shows a sidewalk only on one side of the street along S Hardy Avenue.



This image above shows the newly installed sidewalk to the east of the school that suddenly ends along E 31st Street.



This image above shows the lack of sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure at the intersection of E 31st Street and S Sheley Road.

General Recommendations for Improvements Within One-Block of School Campus

The school driveway entrance off of E 31st Street has a crosswalk but it's a bit faded and was striped with yellow paint. It's recommended that this crosswalk be restriped with high visibility white paint. Both driveway entrances off of S Hardy Avenue are also in need of crosswalks. In their current configuration, they have none. Specifically, the driveway further north would benefit from bump outs to narrow the crossing distance.

On campus, there is a network of paved pedestrian pathways and crosswalks safely leading students where they need to go. The only recommendation is to restripe the crosswalks with white paint, instead of the yellow currently being used.



The image above shows a striped crosswalk off E 31st Street at one of the school's primary driveways.



The image above shows a main driveway off S Hardy Avenue that does not feature a painted crosswalk.

Recommendations at a Glance:

Implementing the following recommendations would enhance feelings of safety and comfort while walking.

- Restripe on campus crosswalks with white paint
- Add crosswalks across all school driveway entrances

High visibility crosswalks can be designed in a variety of ways depending on the context. They can include the following features:

- Ladder or zebra striping
- Additional signage, such as an in-street stop for pedestrian signs, rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB), or a HAWK beacon
- Elevated crossing areas
- Different pavement types in crossing area
- Pedestrian refuge islands
- Bump outs to narrow the crossing distance using a variety of materials such as planters, bollards, flexposts, or more permanent options like a concrete curb.



The images above represent a variety of high visibility crosswalks, including striping, signage, elevated crossing areas, and bump outs.

General Guidelines for Walking to School

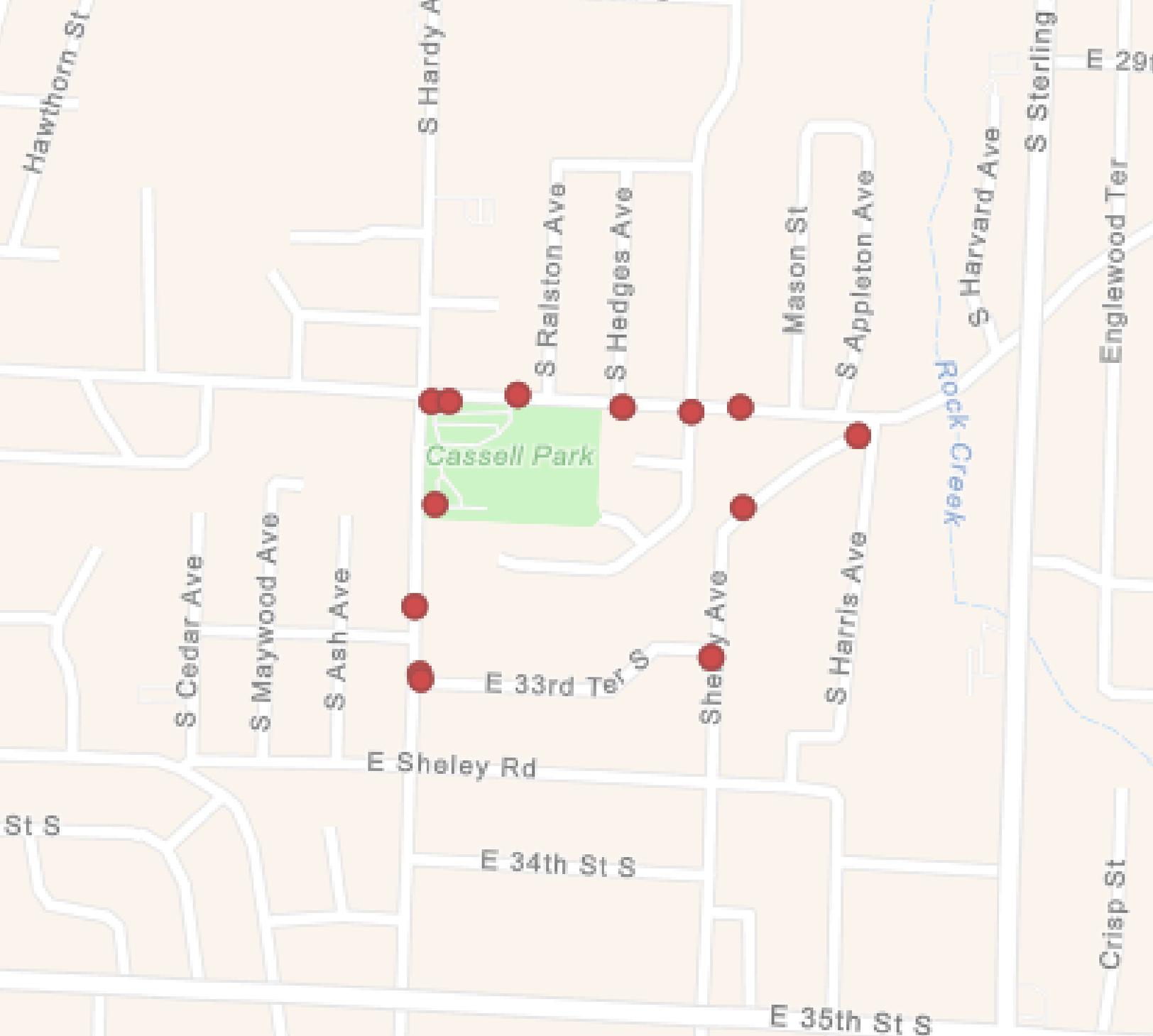
The **Safe Routes to School Partnership** provides guidelines on walking to school depending on the student's age, while understanding the context of the walk is also a significant factor. First and foremost, the question of "how far is too far" is at the discretion of a parent or guardian as they are the ones who best understand the abilities - both physical and cognitive - of their child. However, general guidelines indicate that up to one-half mile is appropriate for kindergarteners, up to one mile is appropriate for older elementary school students, and up to 1.5 miles is appropriate for high schoolers. Not all walks are created equal, though. A one-half mile walk on a wide, protected, and well lit pathway through a neighborhood is not the same as walking the same distance along a narrow, broken sidewalk along major roads. Nuance is inherently required when determining a truly safe path to school for elementary aged children. It is strongly recommended that students are accompanied by an adult at this age level given the nature of these routes.

The image on the right shows a group of young students participating in a walking school bus.



For more information on Safe Routes to School's guidelines on walking to school, go to guide.saferoutesinfo.org

For specific information on Missouri Safe Routes Partnership, go to saferoutespartnership.org/states-resources/missouri



This report was produced by **BikeWalkKC** for **Cassell Park Elementary School** and made possible through funding by the **Children's Mercy Health Foundation**.

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