



# Christian Ott 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 2018, BikeWalkKC has had the honor of partnering with Christian Ott 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 **474** students
- Taught **68** students how to ride a bike
- Given away **10** helmets & **10** bicycles



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.

**Christian Ott 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

There is a sidewalk along the east side of N Noland Road with only a few crossing opportunities. Because Ott is located north of William Chrisman High School, the school zone infrastructure extends down N Noland Road.

24 Highway/East Independence Avenue is a busy, dangerous street; however, it is a bit south from Ott's entrance.

The image on the right shows a crosswalk that does not have a receiving curb ramp on the East side of North Noland Road.



The image above shows the view looking south towards 24 Highway/East Independence Avenue on North Noland Road at the crosswalk by William Crisman High School.

# General Recommendations for Improvements Within One-Block of School Campus

The two main roads that lead students would use to walk to school - N Noland Road and E Jones Road - both have sidewalk infrastructure. The sidewalk along N Nolan Road is not buffered from the road; however, which does reduce feelings of comfort and safety. Despite having this pedestrian infrastructure, due to the traffic environment around Ott Elementary, the school does not encourage students to walk or bike to school as it's believed to pose too great of a risk. School officials are encouraged to collaborate with the City of Independence on how to improve the safety of the walking and biking environment for children.

Both driveway entrances are lacking crosswalks entirely. It is recommended that these are striped and made highly visible. On campus, there are sidewalks on the east side of the school providing safe passage from one of the driveways; however, there are no sidewalks on the west side of the school by the other driveway entrance. Some type of pedestrian infrastructure is recommended on the west side so students are not forced to walk in the grass or in the road.



The image above shows the lack of sidewalk along the west side of N Noland Road.



The image above shows the sidewalk along the west side of N Noland Road that lacks a buffer.

## Recommendations at a Glance:

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

- Stripe crosswalks at both school driveways
- Add pedestrian infrastructure on the west side of the school
- Collaborate with the City of Independence to make pedestrian environment surrounding Ott safer and more comfortable

## 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

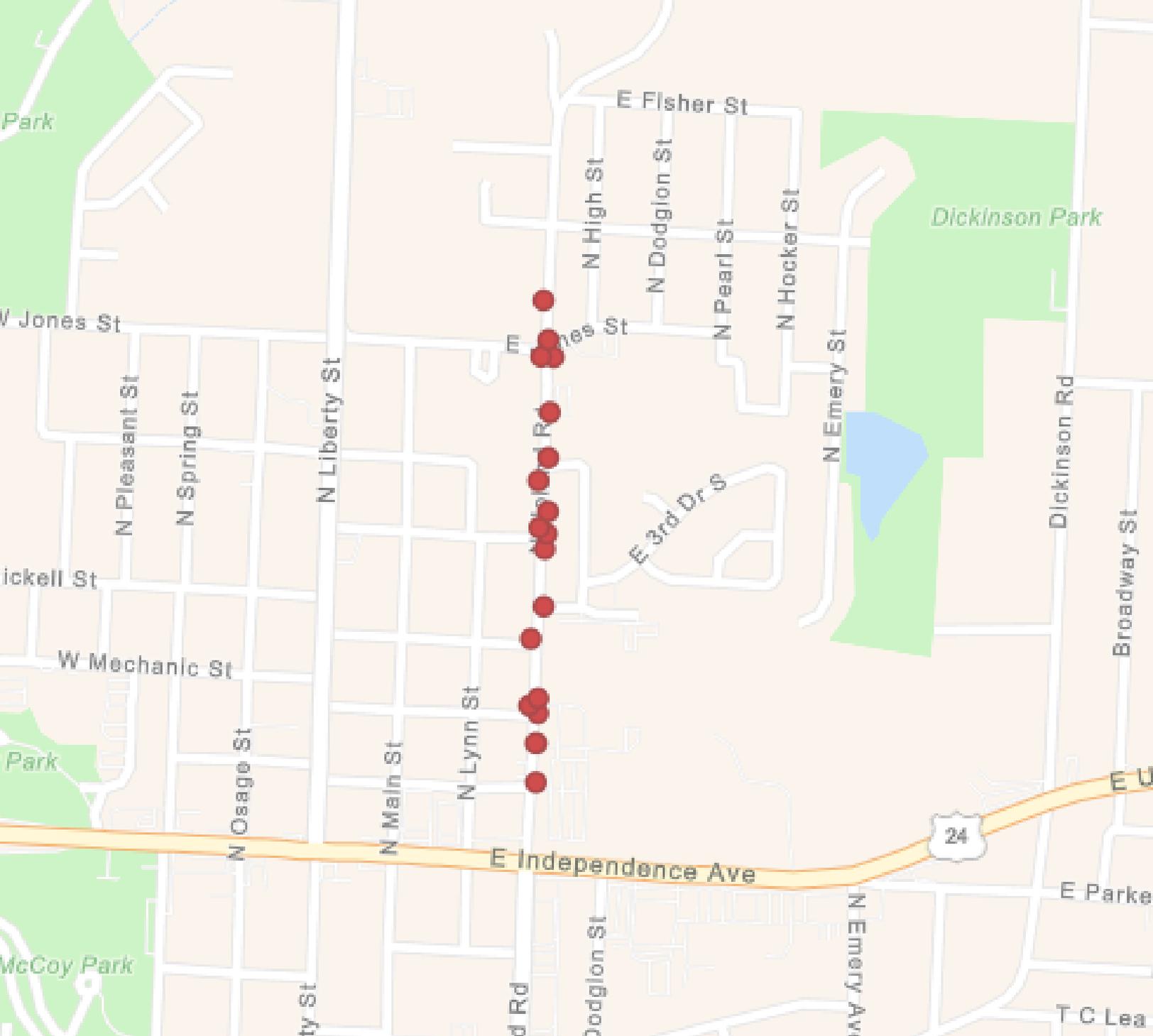
The **Safe Routes to School Partnership** provides guidelines on walking to school depending on the student's age, while understanding the context of the walk is also a significant factor. First and foremost, the question of "how far is too far" is at the discretion of a parent or guardian as they are 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](http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org)*

*For specific information on Missouri Safe Routes Partnership, go to [saferoutespartnership.org/states-resources/missouri](http://saferoutespartnership.org/states-resources/missouri)*



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

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