

# Evaluating School-Related Policies to Encourage Active Communities

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## METHODS

### Study Purpose

- Describe the prevalence of school-related provisions in policies and plans addressing school siting, pedestrian safety, accessibility, and joint use of school facilities for recreational purposes.
- Describe the sociodemographic characteristics associated with such policy/plan provisions.

### Policy Collection/Coding

Policies and plans were collected in 2010 from local governments surrounding 154 secondary schools nationwide. Items collected included:

- Local ordinances (including zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations)
- Comprehensive/Master/General Plans
- Joint/Shared Use Agreements

Plans/policies were coded by researchers using a coding instrument to evaluate the extent to which they specifically address walking/biking and recreation around schools. Weak policies/provisions were coded as 1 or ENC (should, encourage, may, try, attempt). Strong policies/provisions were coded as 2 or REQ (must, shall, require).

### Instrument

A. CODE/ORDINANCE-RELATED ITEMS		A1. Addressed		A2. Strength of Requirement (REQ=required; ENCR=encouraged)						A3. Min. Distance (Specify)
A. Item	Citation	YES	NO	REQ	ENCR	NO	NA			
a. School siting		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
1. Co-location of future/existing schools with parks/athletic fields/open space		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
2. Schools located within walking distance of primary residential areas served		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
b. Sidewalk/sidewalk networks around or within a certain distance of schools		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
c. Crosswalks around or within a certain distance of schools		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
d. Crossing guards located within a certain distance of schools		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
1. Crossing guards located within a certain distance of ES		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
2. Crossing guards located within a certain distance of MS		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
3. Crossing guards located within a certain distance of HS		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
e. Joint-use/Shared-use of school facilities for PA/ recreational purposes		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
1. Joint/shared use by park district		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
2. Joint/shared use by park/recreation department		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
3. Joint/shared use by community recreational league/group (e.g., Little League, Neighborhood Athletic Association)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
4. Joint/shared use by before/after school programs		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
5. Joint/shared use by YMCA		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
6. Other Specify:		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

### Analysis

Descriptive statistics were computed, clustered to account for the sample design, and weighted proportional to the population of the local jurisdictions to account for the relative weight of the policies/plans from multiple jurisdictions inside the same school catchment. **Multivariate logistic regression** models examined the factors influencing whether the policy/plan addressed the topic of interest. To ease interpretation, the **adjusted prevalence** of each policy/plan provision was generated after controlling for all covariates.

## RESULTS

### School-Related Policy and Plan Provisions

Figure 1: Prevalence of School-related Policies in Zoning<sup>a</sup> and Other Related Policies

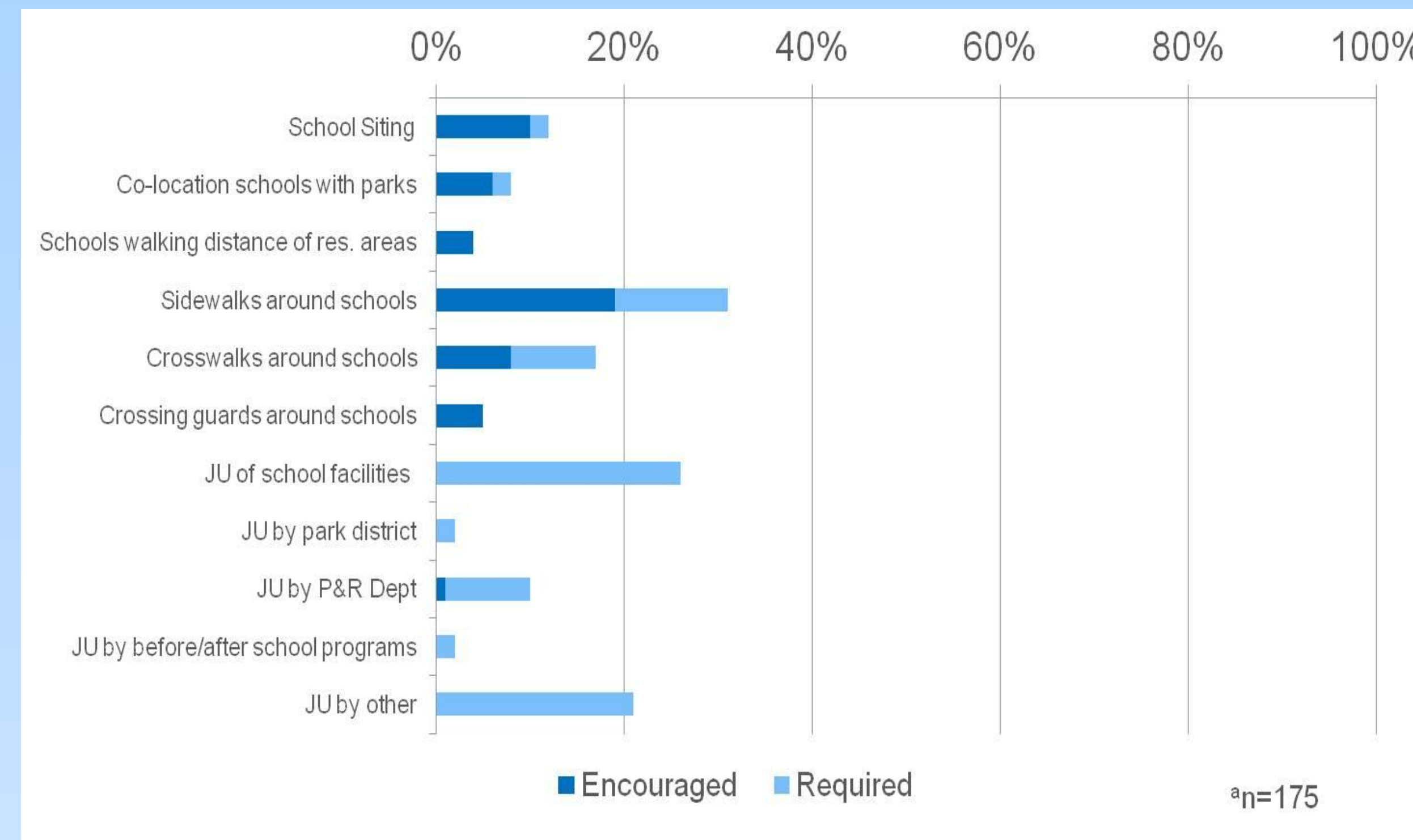


Figure 2: Prevalence of School-related Policies in Plans<sup>a</sup>

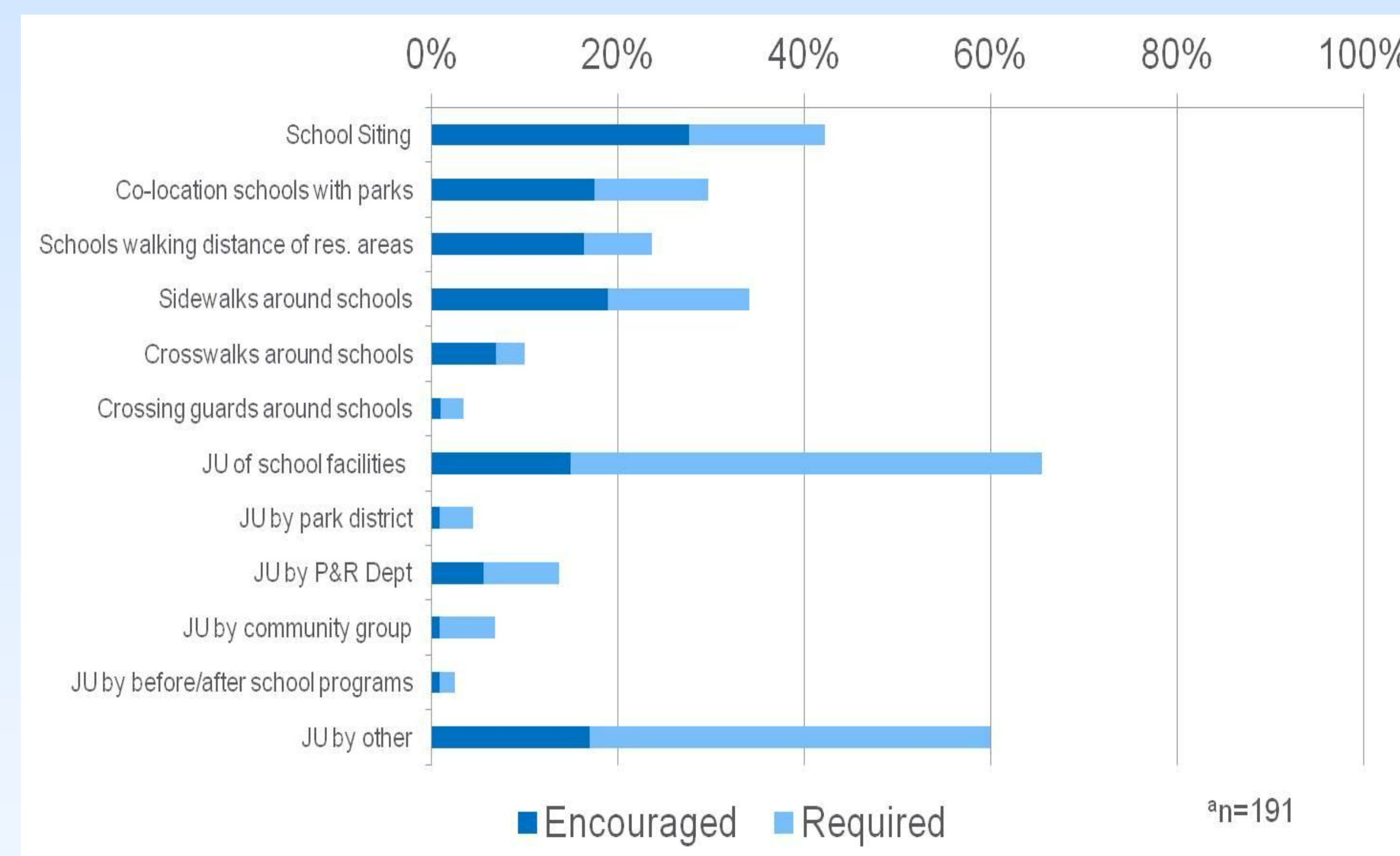
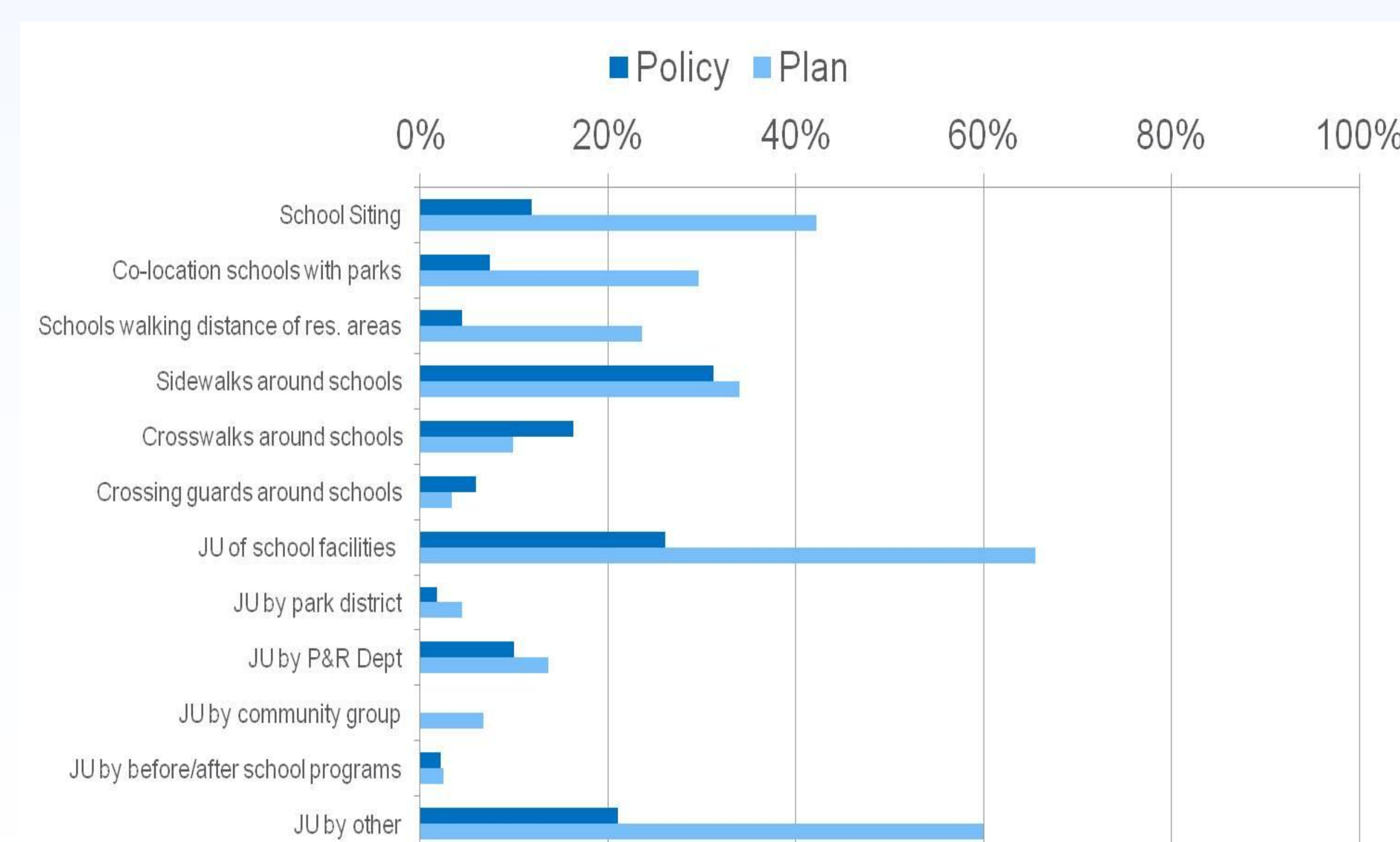


Figure 3: Prevalence of Any (Req. or Enc.) School-related Provisions in Policies and Plans



### Factors Influencing Policy and Plan Provisions

Figure 4: Multivariate Regressions: Community Characteristics Significantly Associated with School-Related Policies and/or Plans

	Adj. %		OR		95% CI	
Low-income areas <sup>a</sup> predicting school-related policy	Not LI	LI				
Policy: School siting	16%	5%	0.22	0.06	0.86	
Plan: Joint use of school facilities	77%	49%	0.09	0.09	0.57	
Plan: Joint use of school facilities by P&R Dept	19%	5%	0.20	0.05	0.81	
Plan: Joint use of school facilities by other (munis/counties)	67%	48%	0.41	0.17	0.99	
>66% White <sup>b</sup> communities predicting school-related policy	≤66% White	≥66% White				
Plan: School siting	54%	33%	0.39	0.17	0.90	
Plan: Schools w/in walking distance of residential areas	32%	15%	0.34	0.13	0.91	
Midwest Areas Predicting <sup>c</sup> School-related Plan	Not MW	MW				
Sidewalks around schools	42%	19%	0.28	0.10	0.80	
Crosswalks around schools	16%	2%	0.09	0.01	0.57	
Joint use of school facilities	70%	46%	0.28	0.10	0.78	
Joint use of school facilities by other (munis/counties)	64%	41%	0.35	0.13	0.94	
Northeast Areas Predicting <sup>c</sup> School-related Plan	Not NE	NE				
School siting	46%	22%	0.28	0.09	0.87	
Co-location of schools with parks/open space	34%	7%	0.11	0.03	0.47	
Sidewalks around schools	44%	9%	0.11	0.33	0.35	
Crosswalks around schools	15%	2%	0.09	0.01	0.74	

\*All models sig at or below p<.05; <sup>a</sup>All low-income models are adjusted for race/ethnicity (non-white ref.), urbanicity (rural ref.), region (south ref.); <sup>b</sup>All >66% White models are adjusted for income (high ref.), urbanicity (rural ref.), region (south ref.); <sup>c</sup>All regional models are adjusted for race/ethnicity (non-white ref.), urbanicity (rural ref.), income (high ref.), and region (south ref.).

Figure 5: Multivariate Regressions: Plans as a Predictor of Zoning

	Adj.* %		AOR*		95% CI	
	No Plan Prov.	Plan Prov.				
Sidewalks around schools	28%	52%	2.96	1.23	7.15	
Joint use of school facilities by other (munis/counties)	12%	26%	3.40	1.17	9.87	

\*All models significant at p<.05 and adjusted for race/ethnicity (non-white ref.), urbanicity (rural ref.), income (high ref.), and region (south ref.).

## CONCLUSION

- Local governments are interested in identifying ways to improve the environment around schools as evidenced by the plan data.
- Data from this study indicate that interest does not always lead to actual policy enactment but policy language is significantly more likely if there is related plan language.
- Most school-related provisions are not prevalent in policies/plans.
- Predominantly white communities are less likely to adopt selected active living-oriented policies and plans.
- Disparities exist in lower income communities and the MW and Northeast regions of the country.

### ABOUT BRIDGING THE GAP

Bridging the Gap is a nationally recognized research program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation dedicated to improving the understanding of how policies and environmental factors influence diet, physical activity and obesity among youth, as well as youth tobacco use. Bridging the Gap is a joint project of the University of Illinois at Chicago's Institute for Health Research and Policy and the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. For more information, visit [www.bridgingthegapresearch.org](http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org)