

# Ivy City Small Area Plan

## Public Life Study



February 2024

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# Introduction

The DC Office of Planning (OP) conducted the Ivy City Public Life Study to inform the Ivy City Small Area Plan (SAP). [A public life study](#) provides a snapshot of people's movement and activities in shared spaces.

Through this study, OP learned how people use Ivy City's public spaces including sidewalks, plazas, and parks by observing and documenting activity in two locations.

The findings from this study will inform recommendations in the Ivy City SAP relating to:

- Public space activation and programming
- Pedestrian comfort and safety
- Land use and community design

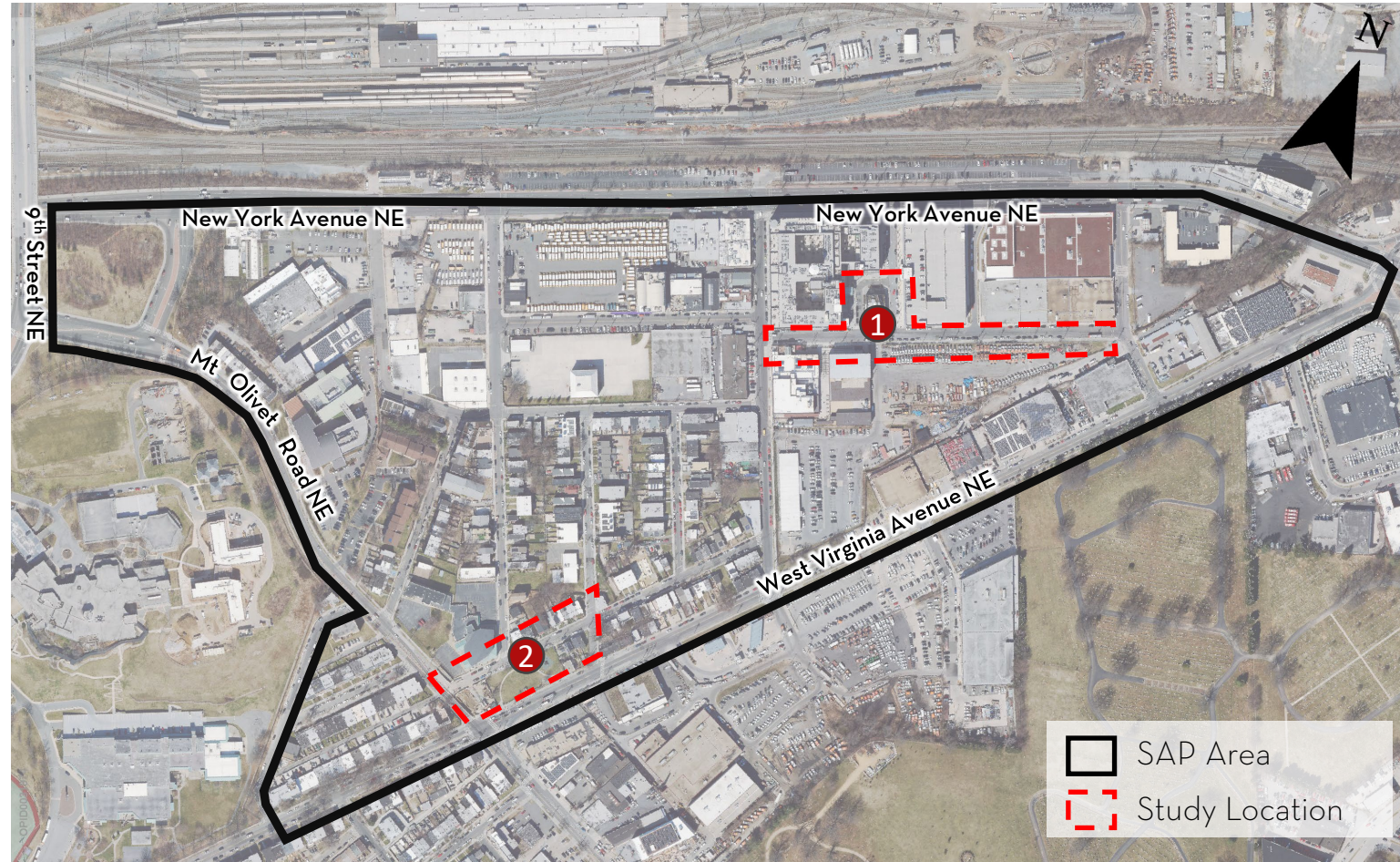
## Study Locations

### 1 Okie Street NE:

This area includes the section of Okie Street NE between Fenwick Street NE and 16<sup>th</sup> Street NE, as well as the southern face of the Hecht Warehouse.

### 2 Lewis Crowe Park:

This area includes Lewis Crowe Park and Central Place NE. The study area is bound by Capitol Avenue NE to the north, West Virginia Road NE to the south, Central Place NE to the east, and Mt Olivet Road NE to the west.



The Ivy City SAP area is bounded by New York Avenue NE to the north, West Virginia Ave NE to the south, and Mt. Olivet Road NE to the west. The community is made up of primarily residential and industrial uses, with some retail.



# How OP Studied Public Life

## Overview

OP invited Ivy City community members to help conduct the public life study in the summer and fall of 2023. OP trained **17** community members who helped OP conduct the fieldwork for this study. Fieldwork was conducted from June through October on both weekdays and weekends. OP staff and community members collected three kinds of information:

- **Counts of pedestrian and bicycle movement:** observers noted the direction of travel, perceived age, perceived gender, and group size of people moving through the study area.
- **Observations about where people sat, stood, and laid down:** observers noted if people were alone or in groups.
- **Surveys from people using public space** that captured perceptions and desires

**IVY CITY PUBLIC LIFE STUDY  
OKIE STREET**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Introduce yourself. Let the respondent know that you are working with the DC Office Of Planning to conduct a Public Life Study in Ivy City. Ask if they have 5 minutes to share their thoughts on Ivy City. All responses will be kept strictly confidential.

1. Do you live in Ivy City?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. If you do not live in Ivy City, what is your home zip code?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What brings you to Ivy City?
  - I live here
  - Just passing through
  - Shopping/Market
  - Spending time with my family
  - Meeting up with friends
  - Recreation/Sports/Exercise
  - Walking my pet
  - Other. Please describe.
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. How did you get here today?
  - Walk
  - Bike/Scooter
  - Metro
  - Bus
  - Private Car
  - Taxi/Rideshare
  - Other. Please describe.
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you feel encouraged to walk around Ivy City, (Yes/No)? Please explain:  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. When walking around in the neighborhood, how often do you run into or see someone you know?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What three (3) words would you use to describe Okie Street:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
8. What improvements would you like to see made to Okie Street?
  - Wider sidewalks
  - More activities for children
  - Landscape
  - Lighting
  - Benches
  - Trash cans
  - Open Space
  - Other, please describe.
 \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the first word that comes to mind when you think about Ivy City?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your race? (optional)  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What is your age range? (optional)  
\_\_\_\_\_

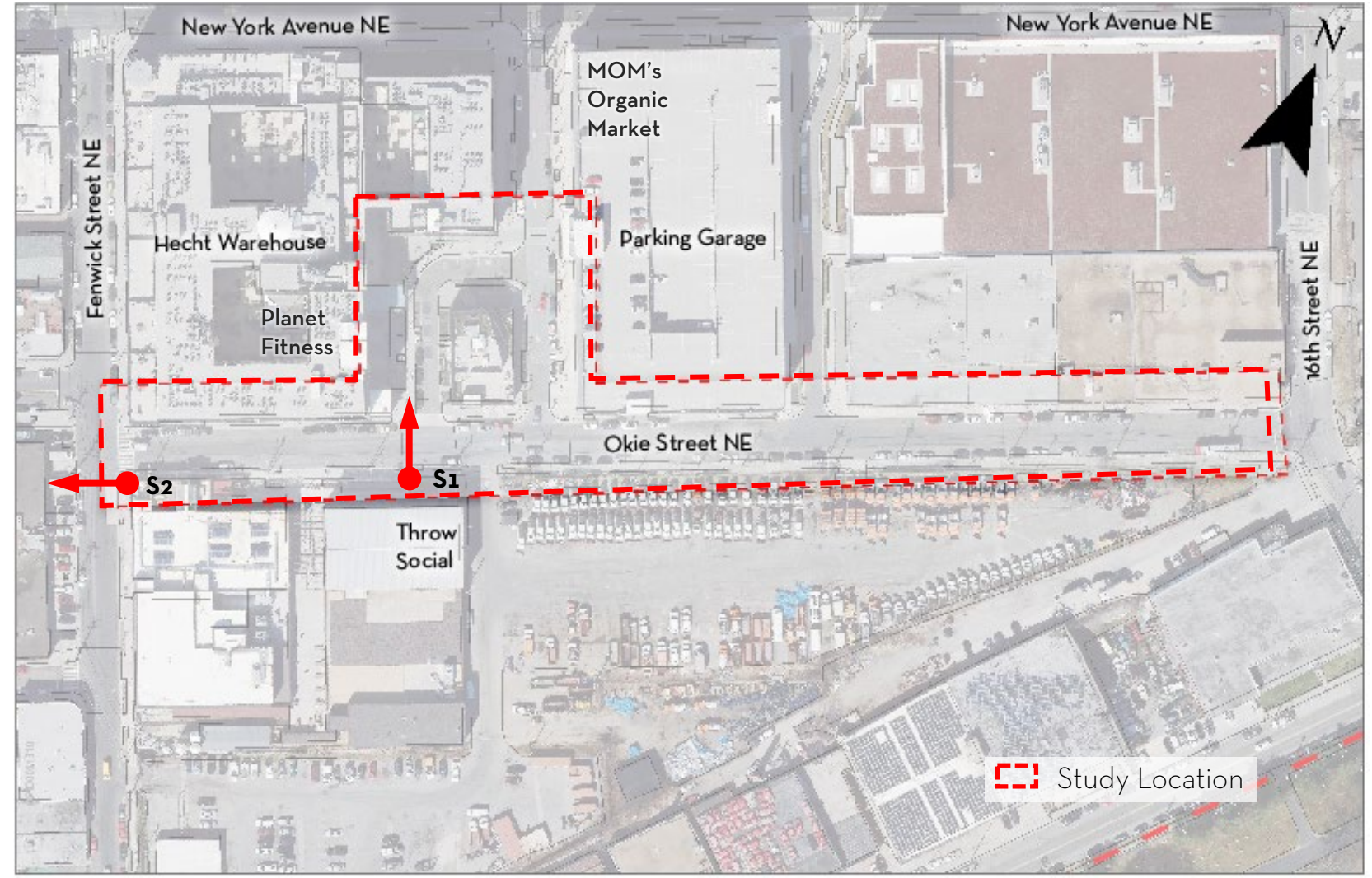


# Study Locations

## Okie Street NE

Okie Street NE was selected for study because it is a key destination in the community with a mix of uses. This area of Ivy City includes 355 homes and over a dozen businesses, which include retailers, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

The pedestrian counts observed pedestrians at the SE corner of the Fenwick Street and Okie Street intersection (S2), and at an area of high pedestrian activity along Okie Street (S1).



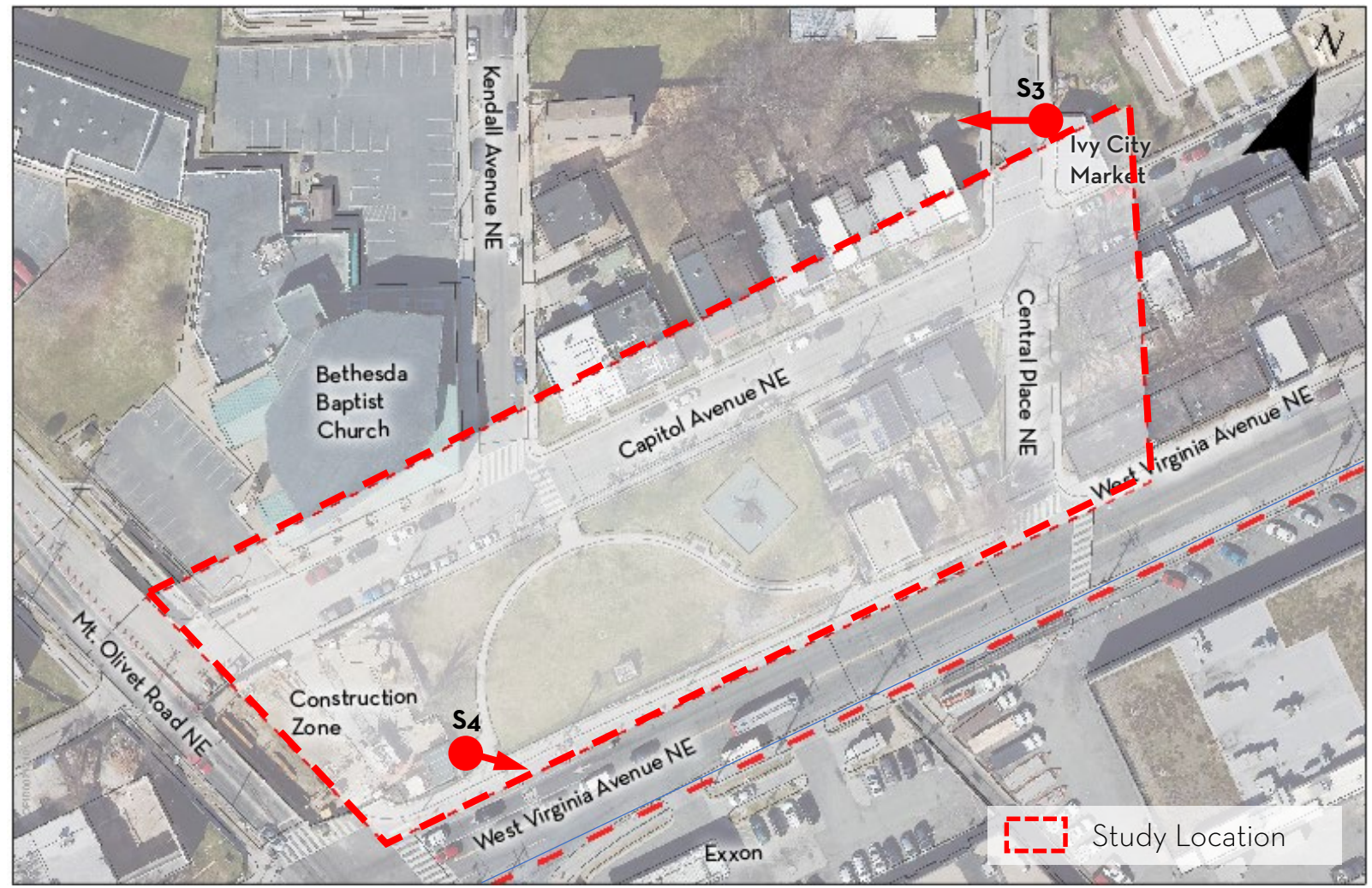


# Study Locations

## Lewis Crowe Park

The Lewis Crowe Park area was selected for study because it is in the heart of the community. The area includes two churches, a retailer, and the Ivy City Clubhouse. The park is a community gathering space and is the only public green space in the community.

Locations for pedestrian counts were chosen to capture movement on the central residential street of the community (S3) and pedestrian activity within and around the park (S4).



# Data Summary

Over the course of the study, OP and community members observed **2,755** total people.

During 20-minute intervals each observation hour:

**2,348 people** were observed moving through the community

**407 people** were observed engaged in stationary activities

**59 surveys** were completed overall. Pedestrians at Lewis Crowe Park were more likely to respond to the survey.

# Data Summary

The average rate of people traveling across study locations varied widely:

**54 people** per hour passed by the Kick Axe, Indoor Axe Throwing Bar

**29 people** per hour crossed the intersection of Okie and Fenwick Streets NE

**11 people** per hour passed by the Ivy City Market on Central Place NE

**17 people** per hour passed or enter Lewis Crowe Park from its southwest corner



# Data Summary

## Who Was Observed?

### Okie Street

The highest foot traffic and the largest number of women were observed on Okie Street. People were most frequently seen during lunch time (12-1PM) and after work (4-7PM).



**5% older adults**



**9% children**

### Lewis Crowe Park

The majority of people observed at Lewis Crowe Park were adults, particularly men. Very few children were observed in the park.



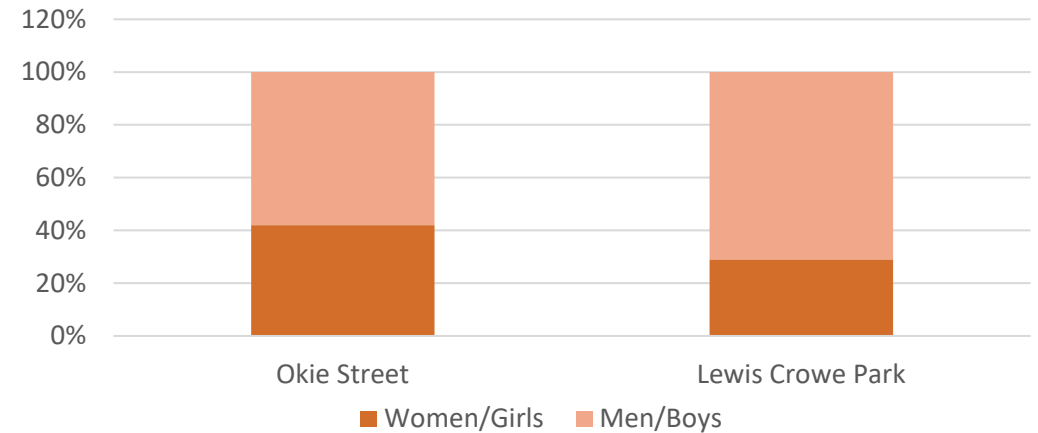
**11% older adults**



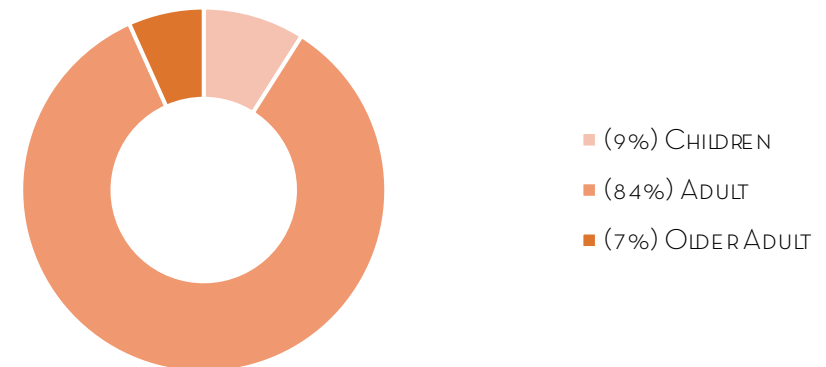
**9% children**

## Overall

Persons Observed by Perceived Gender Overall



Persons Observed by Age Overall



# Data Summary

## Who Was Observed?

### Okie Street NE

People were more likely to walk in groups than stand or sit in groups through the observation period.

Children were most likely to be observed in groups with adults.



### Lewis Crowe Park

Stationary social groups were observed most frequently on Tuesdays throughout the day. Some people at the park shared that it was a meetup place for former and current residents to go around work hours.

Instead of staying at the park, children were more often seen passing through or past the park.

### Central Place NE

Few groups were observed using Central Place NE; however, pedestrians often were seen walking in the street instead of the sidewalks.



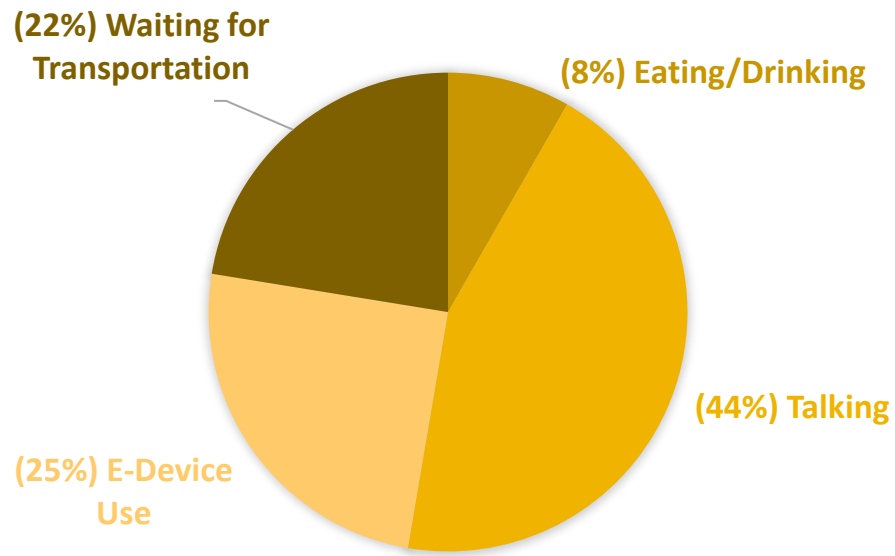
# Data Summary

## Stationary Activity

Observers documented people sitting and standing, eating/drinking, talking, using an e-device (such as a smart phone or tablet), and waiting for transportation (including rideshare services). Talking was most common in both study locations.

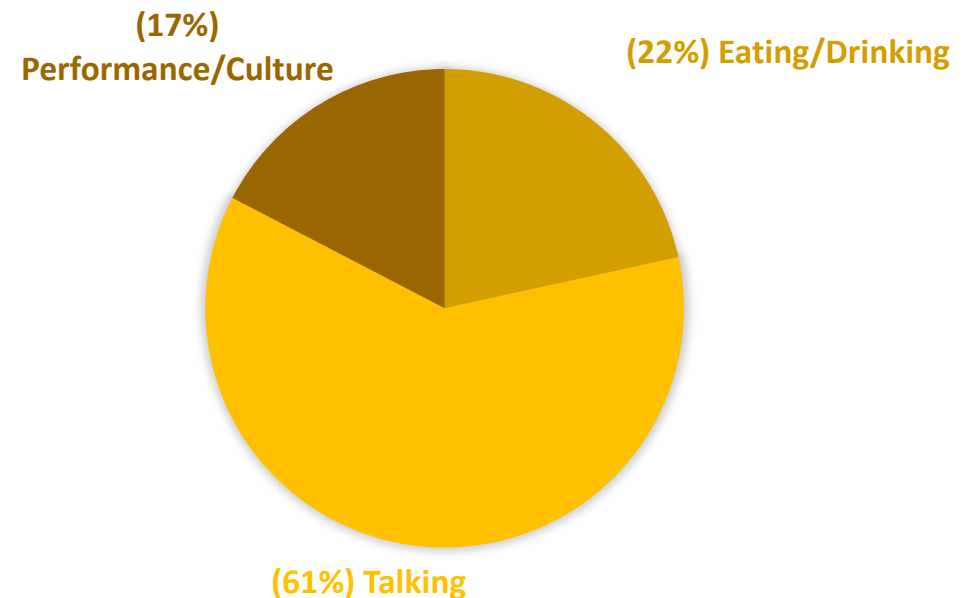
### Okie Street

What People Were Doing  
% of Pedestrians Observed



### Lewis Crowe Park

What People Were Doing  
% of Pedestrians Observed



# Data Summary

## Pedestrian Movement



**85%** walking



**1%** using  
wheelchairs



**10%** biking



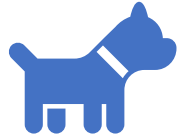
**2%** using scooters  
or skating



**1%** jogging or  
running



**2%** with strollers



**3%** with pets

**10% of people observed were cyclists**, which is consistent with a bicycle sales and repair shop on Okie Street and bike lanes on West Virginia Ave NE. A higher share of cyclists were observed on Central Place NE and at Lewis Crowe Park and West Virginia Avenue NE than on Okie Street, suggesting that these areas may feel safer or more accessible to people on bike.

Although Central Place NE saw the fewest number of pedestrians, it hosted the highest share of pet walkers.



# Key Findings

1

Residents, workers, and visitors use public space differently.

2

Pedestrians stand, sit, and gather in the shade.

3

Perceptions of safety impact the use of public space in Ivy City.

4

More seating in public space would benefit pedestrian activity from ground floor uses.

1

Residents, workers, and visitors  
use public space differently.



# Who is in Ivy City?



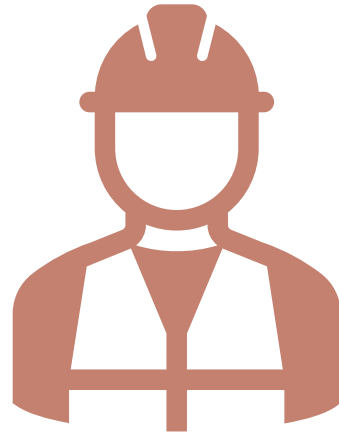
## Residents

**315 youth** (0-17 years) live in Ivy City

**1,840 adults** (18-64 years) live in Ivy City

**142 older adults** (65+ years) live in Ivy City

**349 households** in Ivy City with children



## Workers

**1,211 people work** in Ivy City, but live outside of Ivy City

**730 people live** in Ivy City, but work outside of Ivy City

**10 people work and live** in Ivy City



## Visitors

A number of establishments draw from surrounding communities:

- **2 grocers**
- **4 distillers and breweries**
- **4 restaurants**
- **6+ entertainment venues**
- **1 hotel**
- **3 places of worship**

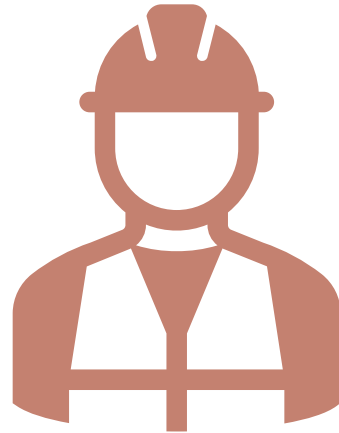
# Who was observed in public space?



## Residents

**Survey respondents in Lewis Crowe Park were twice as likely to live in Ivy City than respondents on Okie Street.**

Pedestrians observed on Central Place NE were often seen multiple times in an observation period, indicating they may live nearby.



## Workers

**A 14% increase in pedestrian activity during weekdays** on Okie Street NE may indicate the presence of non-resident workers who engage with the community.

Although District Government is a primary employer in the area, few employees were observed in the public space.

Some people who work at local businesses were observed taking breaks.



## Visitors

**Survey respondents on Okie Street were 24% less likely to live in Ivy City and three times more likely to live outside of the District.**

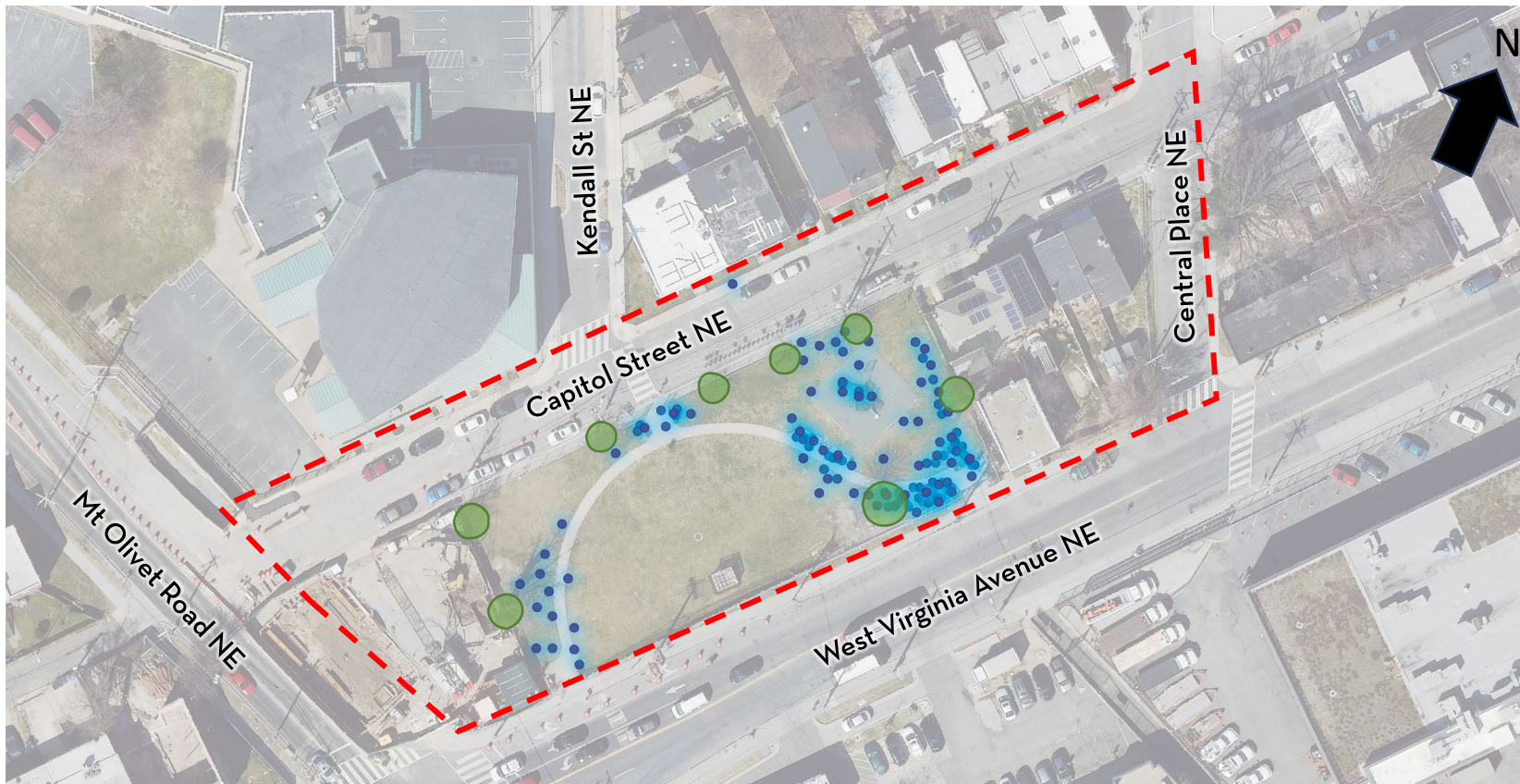
Many pedestrians were observed standing outside their cars or waiting for ride share or bus transportation.

2




Pedestrians stand, sit, and  
congregate in the shade.

# Lewis Crowe Park

People gathered around trees that are in the park. People likely gravitate towards trees because they provide shade.



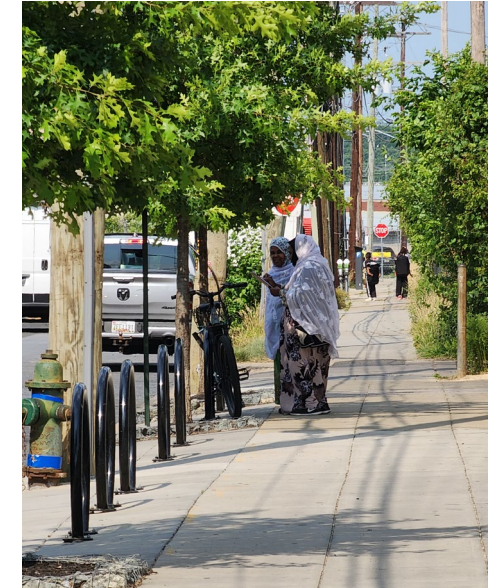
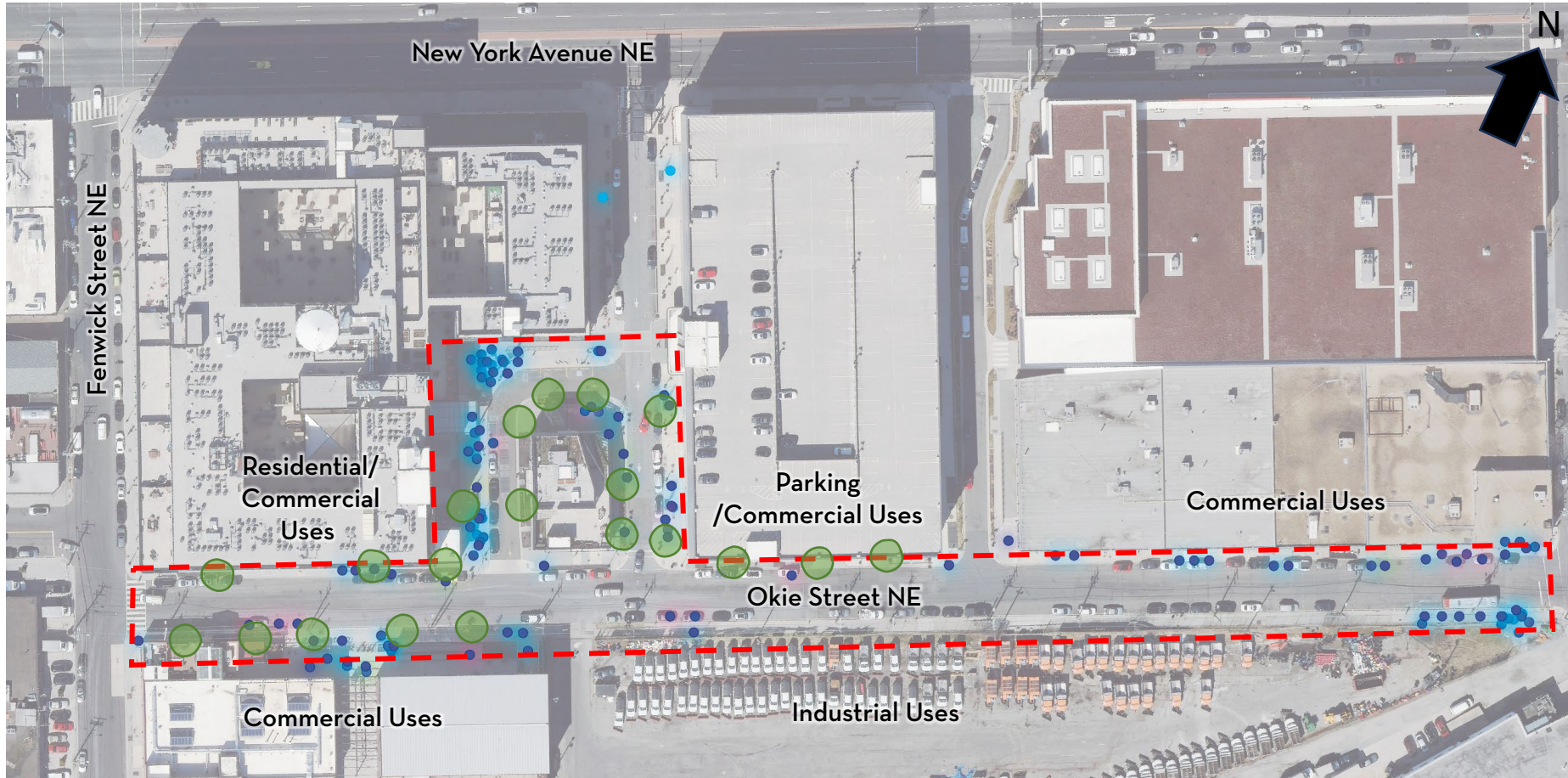
## Legend

-  Study Area Boundary
-  Observed Stationary Pedestrian
-  Tree



# Okie Street

Pedestrians sit and stand in areas of shade cast by the buildings.



## Legend

- Study Area Boundary
- Observed Stationary Pedestrian
- Tree

3

Perceptions of safety impacts  
use of public space in Ivy City.

# What People are Saying

Survey respondents on Okie Street described Ivy City as:



Areas where women and children gather are frequently the places where people feel safest.

Observers were more likely to see women and children on Okie Street and especially near the Hecht Warehouse. Women and girls were also most likely to be observed in the evening hours along Okie Street than other locations.

This pattern indicates that people likely feel more comfortable in this location than Lewis Crowe Park or Central Place.

Okie Street has good street lighting and active ground floors, which frequently help people feel safer.

However, survey results indicate that safety is still a concern for many people on Okie Street.



# What People are Saying

Survey respondents in Lewis Crowe Park described Ivy City as:



People who use the park were likely to use it frequently and for long periods of time. They also mostly identified the park as a safe place to be, which contrasts with community perceptions of the park.

Few children were observed using the park: only 6 children were observed spending time in the park over 18 hours of observation.

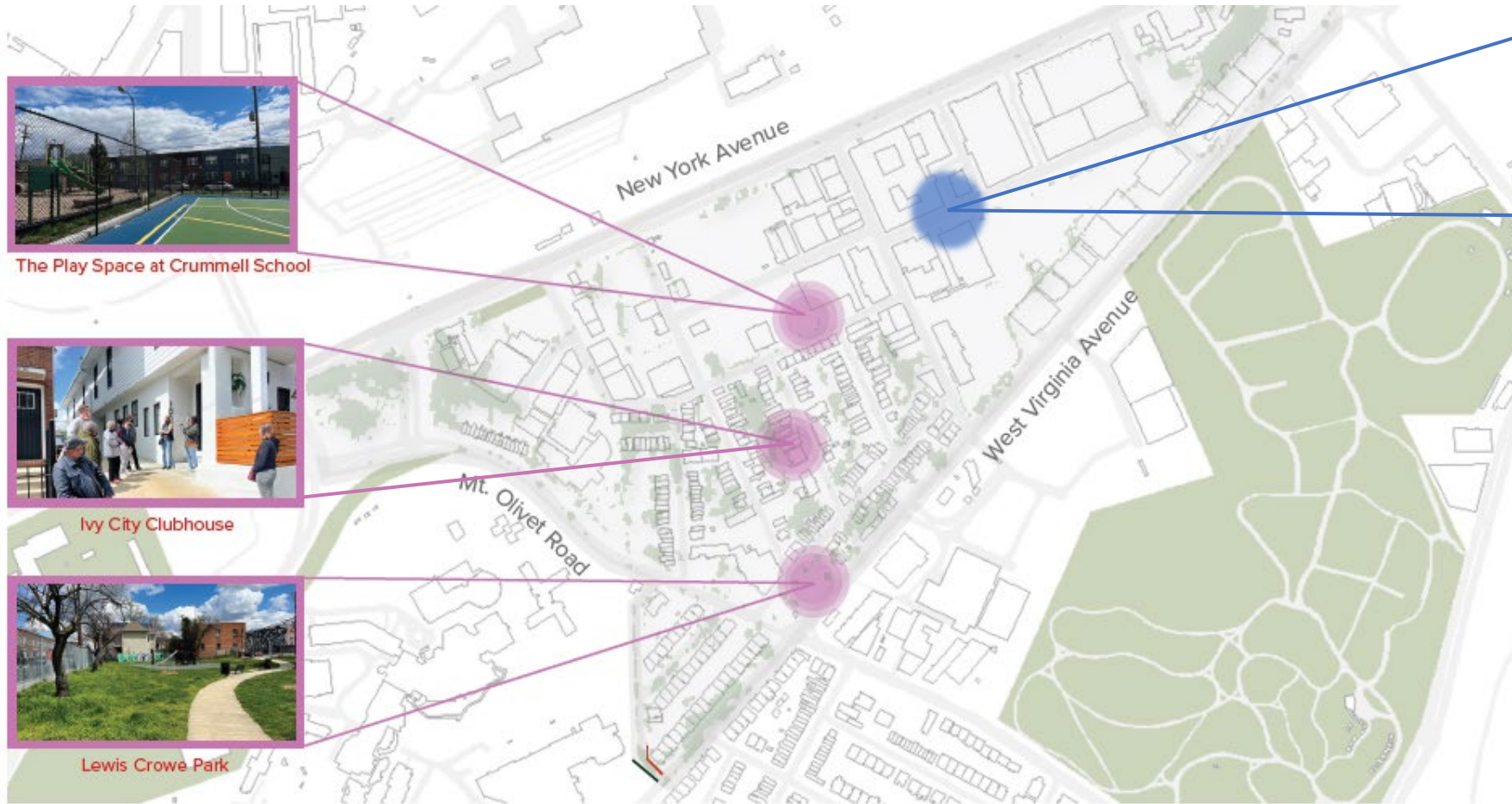
In the evening, the park has no lighting, which makes it harder to see what is happening in the park as the sun sets. Improved lighting was a top desire of survey respondents.



4

More seating in public space  
would benefit pedestrian activity  
from ground floor uses.

# Okie Street is a Crossroads of Activity



Okie Street saw the highest pedestrian movement per hour.

While there are few opportunities for *gathering*, Okie St. NE is an **activity node** where people meet friends before going into a business, wait for transportation, and take breaks during the day.

## Legend

-  Community Gathering Places
-  Activity Node

# Okie Street is a Crossroads of Activity

Ground floor activity on Okie Street is anchored by housing, destination retail and entertainment, and some service retail, such as Planet Fitness.



● Standing ● Seated - Public Seating

People who were standing still or seated were most common near retail uses, especially at entrances.

Okie Street NE saw more than twice as many pedestrians per hour than other observation locations.

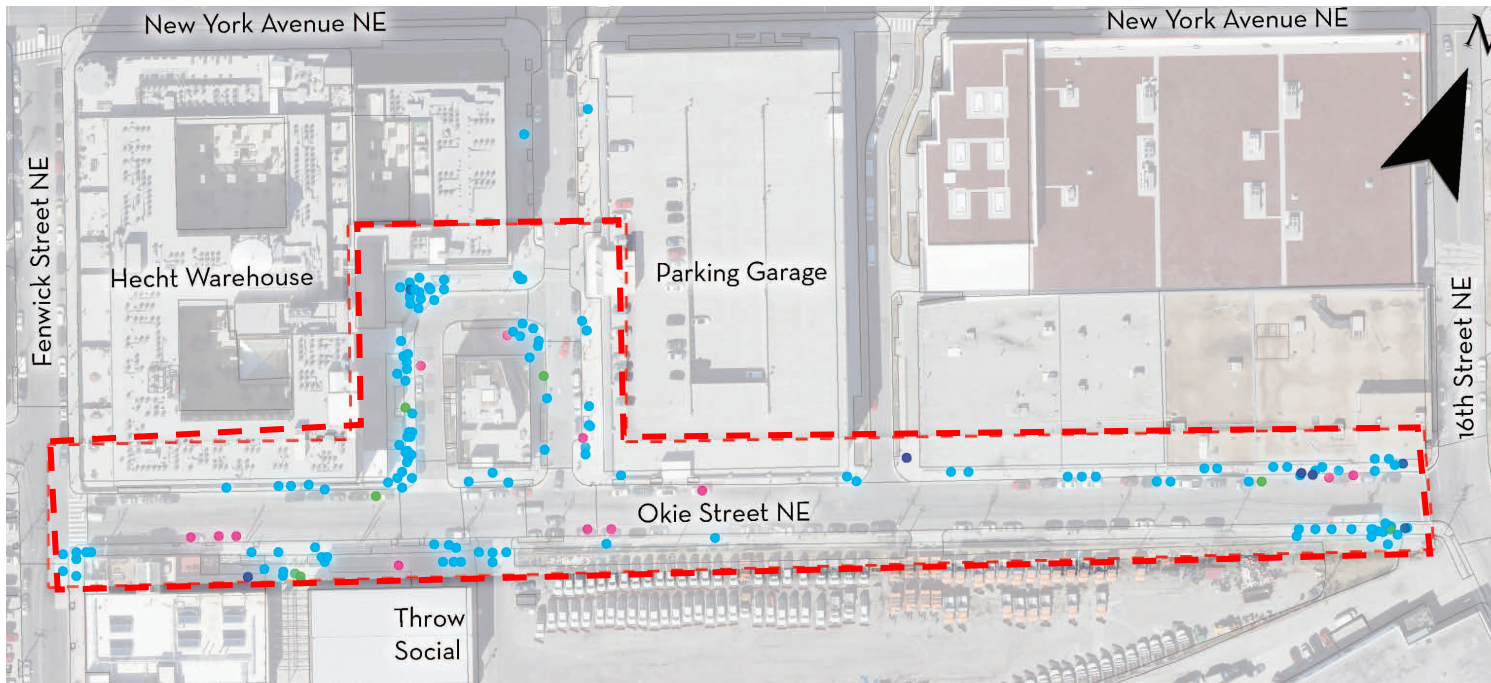
**50% of the survey respondents on Okie Street NE walked.**



# There is a need for more seating where people are most likely to be stationary.

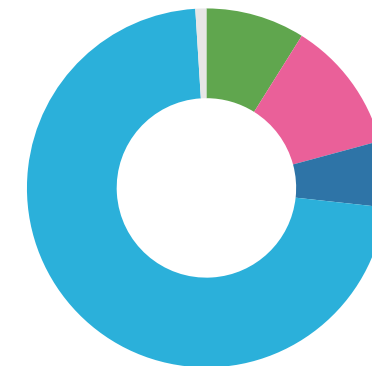
## Okie Street NE

● Standing ● Seated - Public Seating ● Seated - Private/Café ● Seated - Improvised



Although some businesses along Okie Street provide seating options, only **16% of people observed were sitting**. Notably, the café-style patio seating in front of the Hecht Warehouse was lightly used on the observation days.

**10% of people** were observed sitting informally on steps and retaining walls outside of businesses, as well as sitting in their private vehicles.



### Observed Actions

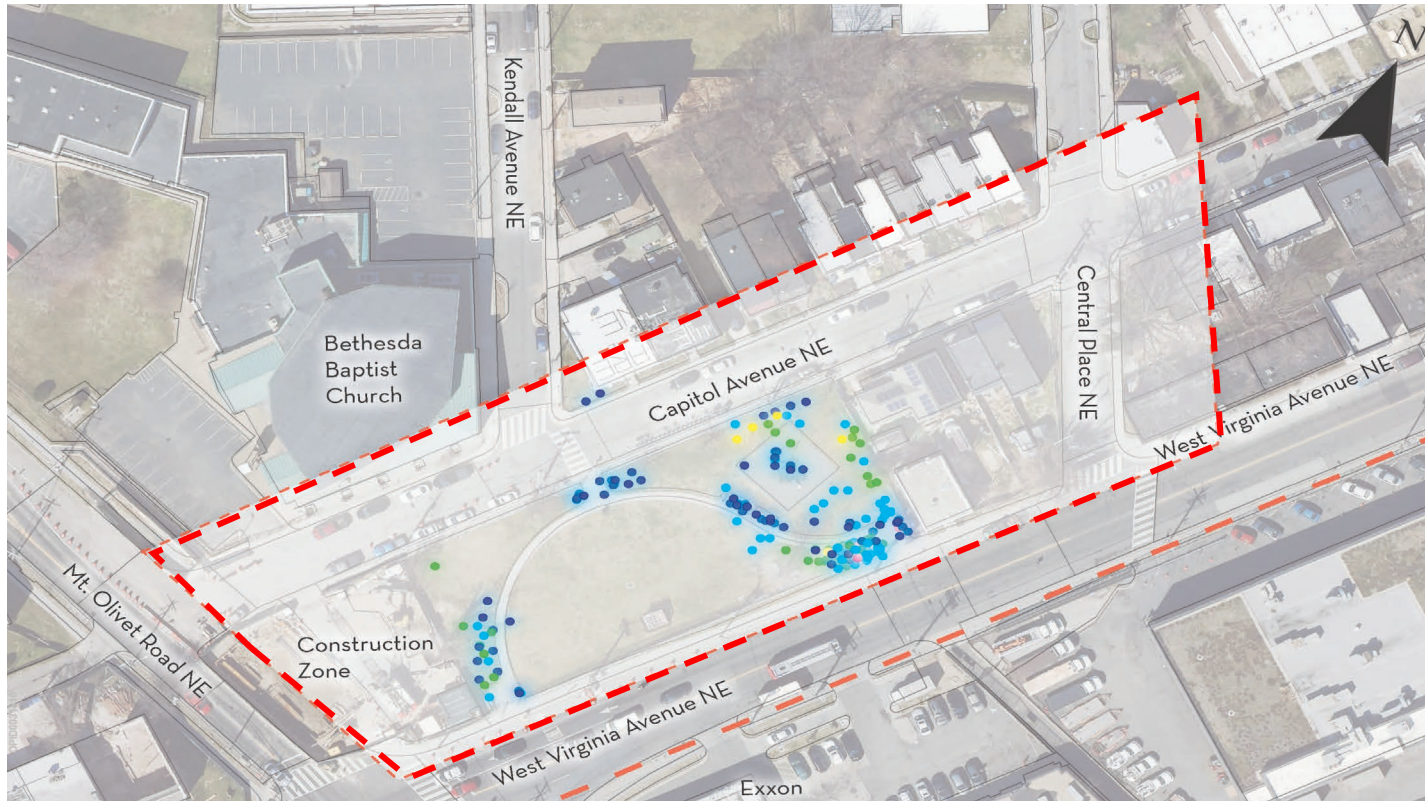
- (9%) SITTING IMPROVISED
- (11%) PRIVATE SEATING
- (6%) SITTING IN PUBLIC SEATING
- (73%) STANDING/LEANING
- (1%) LYING



# There is a need for more seating where people are most likely to be stationary.

## Lewis Crowe Park

● Standing ● Seated - Public Seating ● Seated - Private/Café ● Seated - Improvised ● Lying



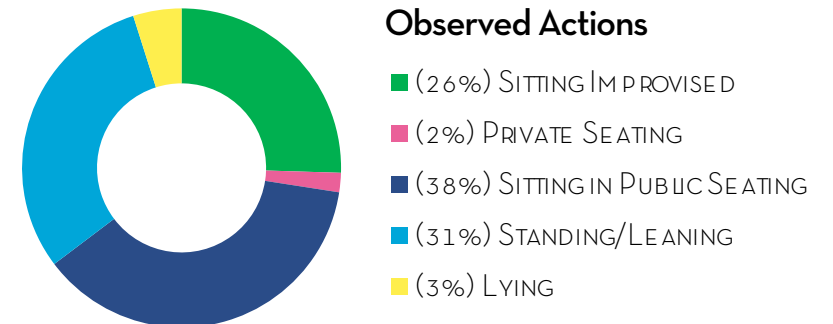
**34% of people used the provided benches** within the park.

Most people avoided the open space in the center of the park.

**25% of individuals sat on informal seating**, including:

- On the play set
- On the retaining wall along West Virginia Ave NE
- On chairs and other seating brought with them to the park in order to create clusters of seating for engaging with others

People tended to stay in the park for long periods of time but would come and go for refreshments or restroom use.





# Opportunities

The observations and surveys explored in this study have highlighted the following considerations for the Ivy City Small Area Plan:



Identify appropriate seating and amenities for areas where people are already gathering.



Increase shading and other amenities that make public space more comfortable.



Design Lewis Crowe Park to meet the needs of children, adults, and older adults.



Strengthen the connection between active building uses and enjoyable public spaces.

# What Happens Next

***We want to hear your feedback!*** Please share your comments in the survey on the project website.

***Come chat with OP staff in person.*** Join OP in March for the Ivy City Small Area Plan Community Workshop to discuss these findings and brainstorm specific recommendations to improve the quality of public life in Ivy City. Join our mailing list online to receive updates.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PUBLIC LIFE INITIATIVES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, VISIT:  
[PLANNING.DC.GOV/PAGE/PUBLIC-LIFE-INITIATIVES](https://planning.dc.gov/page/public-life-initiatives)



## SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS:

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TUNG NGUYEN

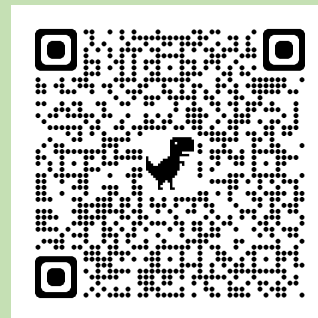
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TO FOLLOW PROGRESS ON THE IVY CITY SMALL AREA PLAN, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW OR VISIT:  
**[publicinput.com/IvyCitySAP](https://publicinput.com/IvyCitySAP)**





# Appendix – Methodology

# Observation Methods

OP staff and community members collected three kinds of information:

- Counts of pedestrian and bicycle movements. The observers noted the direction of travel, perceived age, perceived sex, and group size of people moving through the study area.
- Mapping where people sat, stood, and laid down. The observers noted if people were alone or in groups.
- Collecting surveys from people using public space that captured perceptions and desires.



## Pedestrian Screenline Counts

At a fixed location, pedestrians are counted who cross an imaginary screenline in front of the observer. The pedestrians are identified by their direction of travel across the screenline. Accompanying information is identified (e.g., age, sex, mode of transportation).



## Stationary Activity Mapping

Within a given area, pedestrians who remain stationary are identified. Stationary pedestrians are identified by location on a map, and accompanying information is gathered (e.g., age, sex, posture).



## Participant Intercept Surveys

Pedestrians throughout the study area chosen at random and surveyed. This method provides the opportunity to engage with the subjects of the study and gain valuable insight through a specially developed questionnaire.

# Observation Dates

By observing public life on a given weekday and weekend day, we can gain an understanding of how public life might interact on most weekdays or weekends within the neighborhood.

Observations are made throughout the span of the day, on an hour-by-hour basis.

For the Ivy City Study, we observed the weekday (Tuesday) from 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM, and on the weekend (Saturday) from 10:00 AM – 8:00 PM.

Within the hour, we observed each activity for one 20-minute period. The project combined observations to extrapolate trends, such as hourly travel rates.

 Initial Observation Day  
 Gap Observation Day

June						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

July						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

August						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

September						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

October						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				