

Memo

To: Lowndes County Public and Private Schools, Interested Parties, General Public
From: Transportation and Environmental Staff, Southern Georgia Regional Commission
CC: Chelsea Weldon, Georgia SRTS School Outreach Coordinator – South Georgia
Date: 4/17/20
Re: Vehicle Crashes Near Schools in Lowndes County

Introduction

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the state of Georgia's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program partner with local governments and agencies to determine how to make roads and public rights-of-way safer for all users. Traffic safety around schools is a key concern due to a combination of vulnerable road users (in particular, children who walk or bike to school), periods of high traffic volume (e.g., school pick-up and drop-off times), high-risk drivers (e.g., high school students), and school bus traffic. The purpose of this memo is to provide information regarding traffic safety around schools in Lowndes County. This information may be used to help determine future investments in transportation infrastructure; to identify priorities for road user education and law enforcement; and to inform future transportation plans and policies.

This memo examines crash trends for locations within 1/2 mile of public and private schools in Lowndes County. Over the five-year period from January 1, 2013 through December 31, 2017 according to data provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation, Lowndes County experienced 16,261 crashes in the public right-of-way. Out of this total, 3,663 occurred within 1/2 mile of a school.

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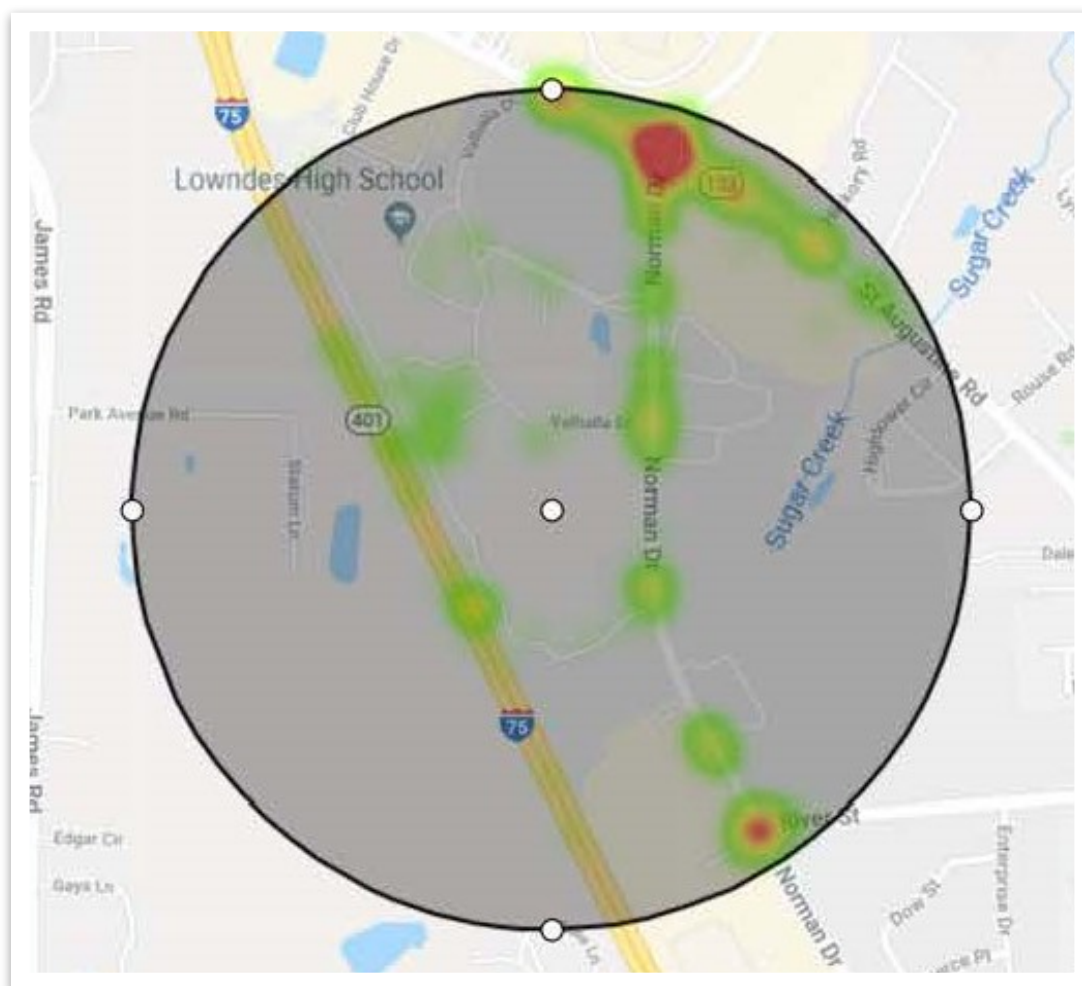
Lowndes County Schools

A total of 11 public schools and 10,500 students make up the Lowndes County School system. This includes 7 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 1 high school. 8 of these schools are located in the city of Valdosta; Clyattville Elementary, Hahira Elementary, and Hahira Middle schools are located in their respective communities. The first class at Lowndes County schools begins at 7:45 AM, and school dismissal occurs at 2:45 PM. For this reason, this report considers 7:00 – 8:00 AM to be school arrival hours and 2:00 – 3:30 PM to be school dismissal hours.

The area around Lowndes County schools was found to be generally free from major incident. The exceptions to this are schools that are located next to highways or heavy traffic areas, such as major intersections. Furthermore, there were few crashes that directly involved or were related to the school or school children. The majority of the crashes were reportedly due to tailgating or failure to signal properly.

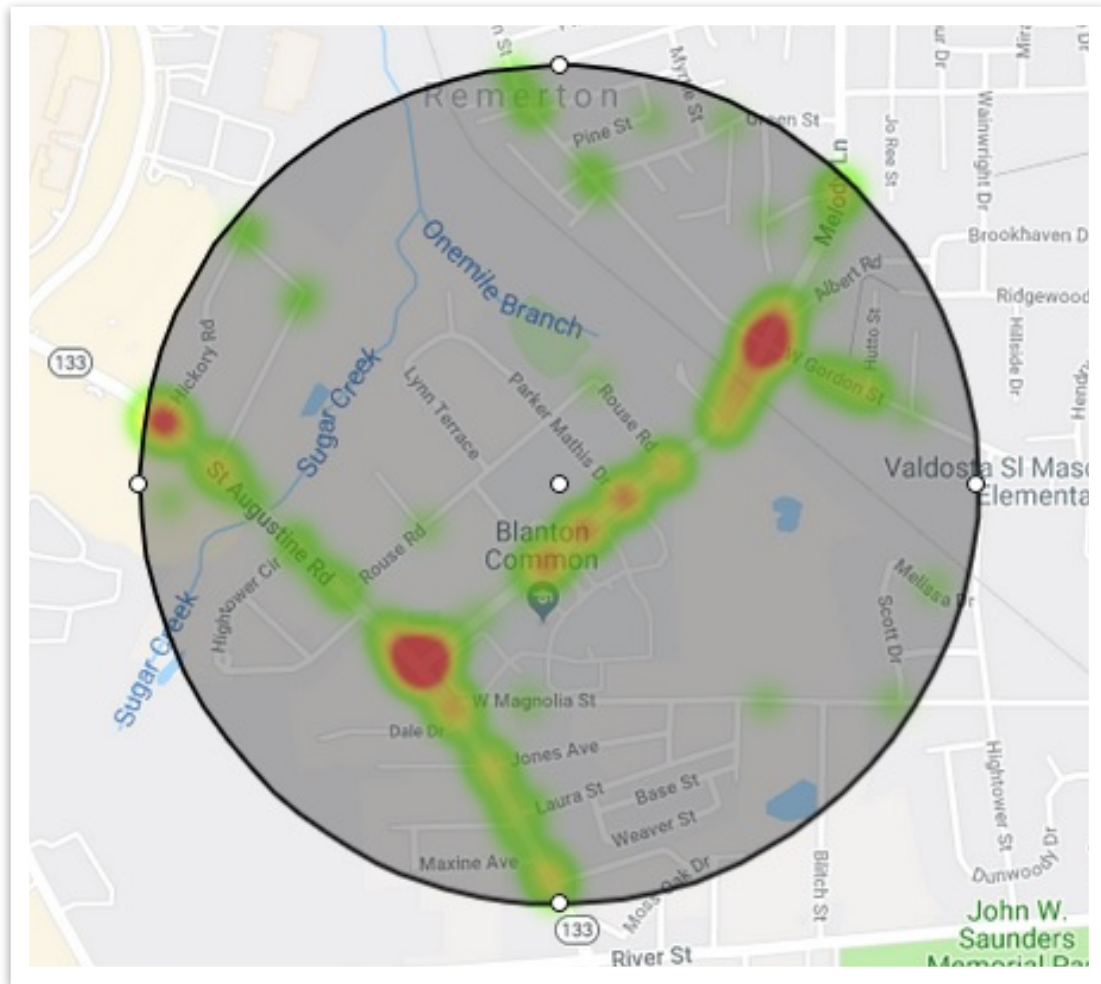
Lowndes High School

Lowndes High School is located along Norman Drive and off of St. Augustine Road in the City of Valdosta. Within a ½ mile radius of Lowndes High School, there were a total of 475 crashes that resulted in property damage and 29 crashes that resulted in injury. However, the majority of these crashes occurred on either I-75 or St. Augustine Road, two major highways that carry significant amounts of non-school related traffic. Additionally, 2 fatal crashes occurred within the school's analysis area during school dismissal/arrival hours. No specific correlation of any of these crashes can be made to school-related traffic.



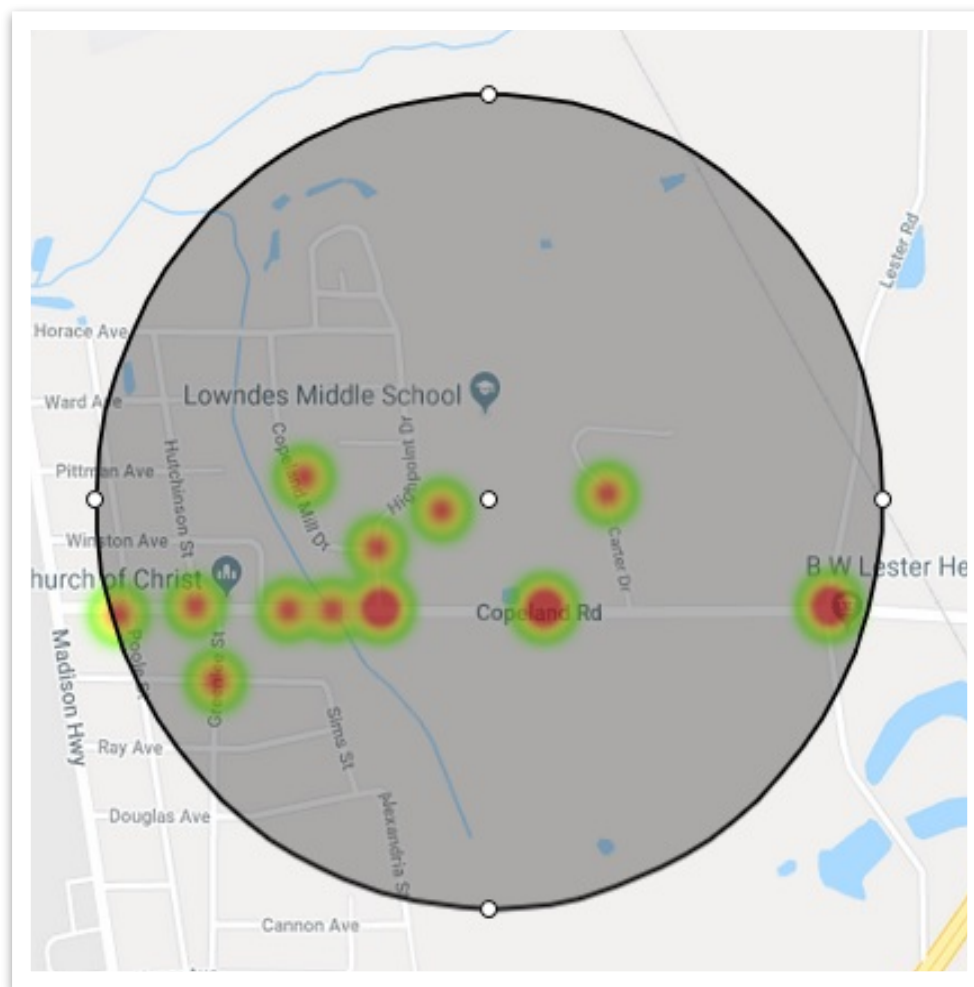
Lowndes High Alternative School

Lowndes High Alternative School is located between GA-133 and the Remerton city limits on Lankford Drive in Valdosta. The majority (134) of the crashes, out of the 313 total, in the school analysis area occurred on GA-133 and the intersection of W Gordon Street & Lankford Drive. There were a total of 17 crashes within a ½ mile radius of the school that resulted in injury. Poor signaling or failure to yield was the reported leading cause for the majority of the crashes near this school.



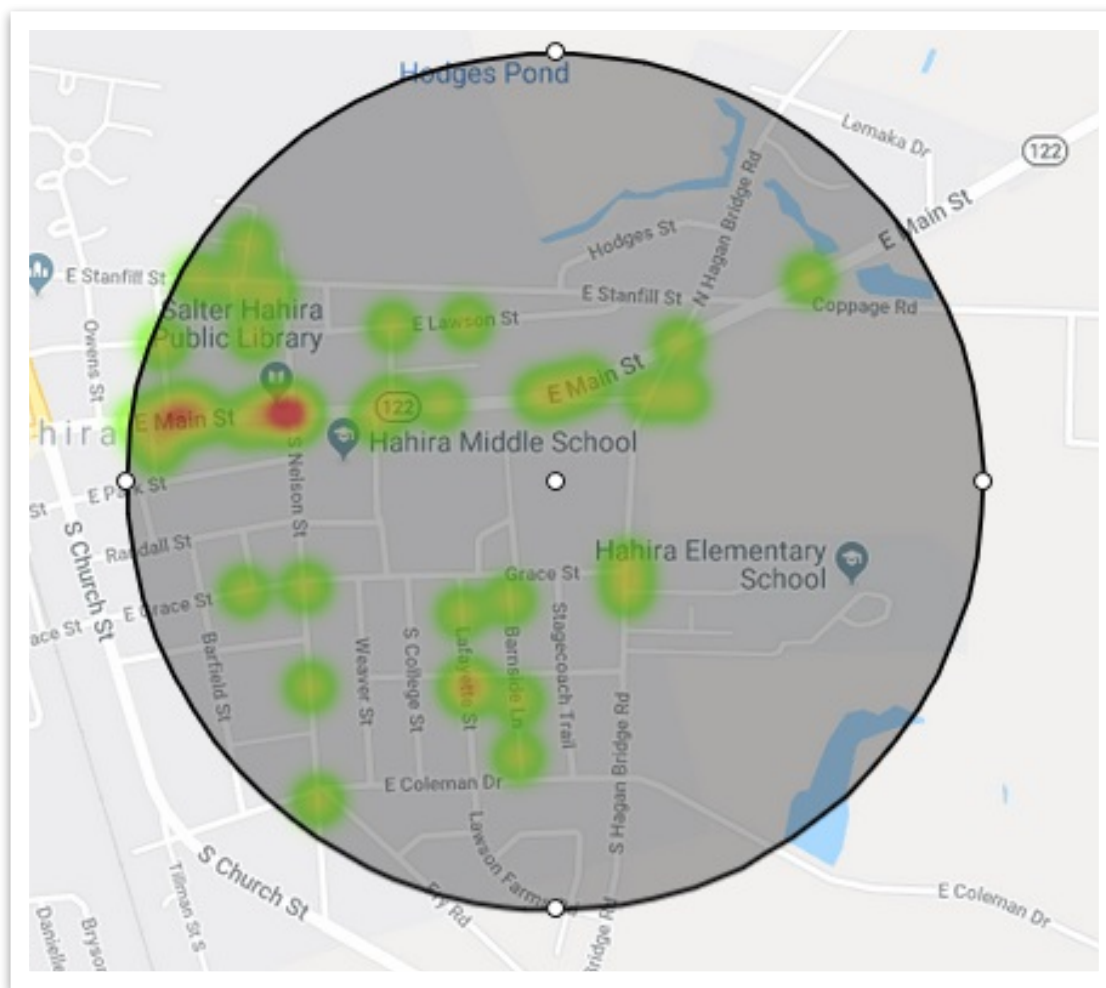
Lowndes Middle School

Between 2013 and 2017, 11 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Lowndes Middle School. Of these crashes, 7 occurred during daylight, and 2 resulted in serious injury. 3 crashes occurred during school arrival hours (6AM – 8AM). Excluding a crash with a deer, there were no notable causes for the crashes that occurred during school arrival hours. There was 1 crash that involved a pedestrian. Reportedly, the pedestrian was unaware of the fact that he was walking into traffic due to his attention being distracted by a dog. This led to a driver crashing into the pedestrian. The pedestrian suffered serious injuries from the crash. There were no crashes involving bicyclists, motorcyclists, or fatalities.



Hahira School Campus

53 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Hahira Middle School & Elementary School. 2 of these crashes resulted in minor injuries and one resulted in serious injury. Slightly more than half (32) of the crashes occurred during daylight hours. There were a total of 4 crashes that occurred during school arrival hours (7:00 AM – 8:00 AM); and there were three crashes that occurred during school dismissal hours (1:00 – 3:00 PM). One crash occurred at 1:52 PM and resulted in serious injuries. Reportedly, a juvenile (age 15) driving a golf cart had disregarded a stop sign/signal and suffered injuries when he was ejected from his vehicle while attempting to turn.



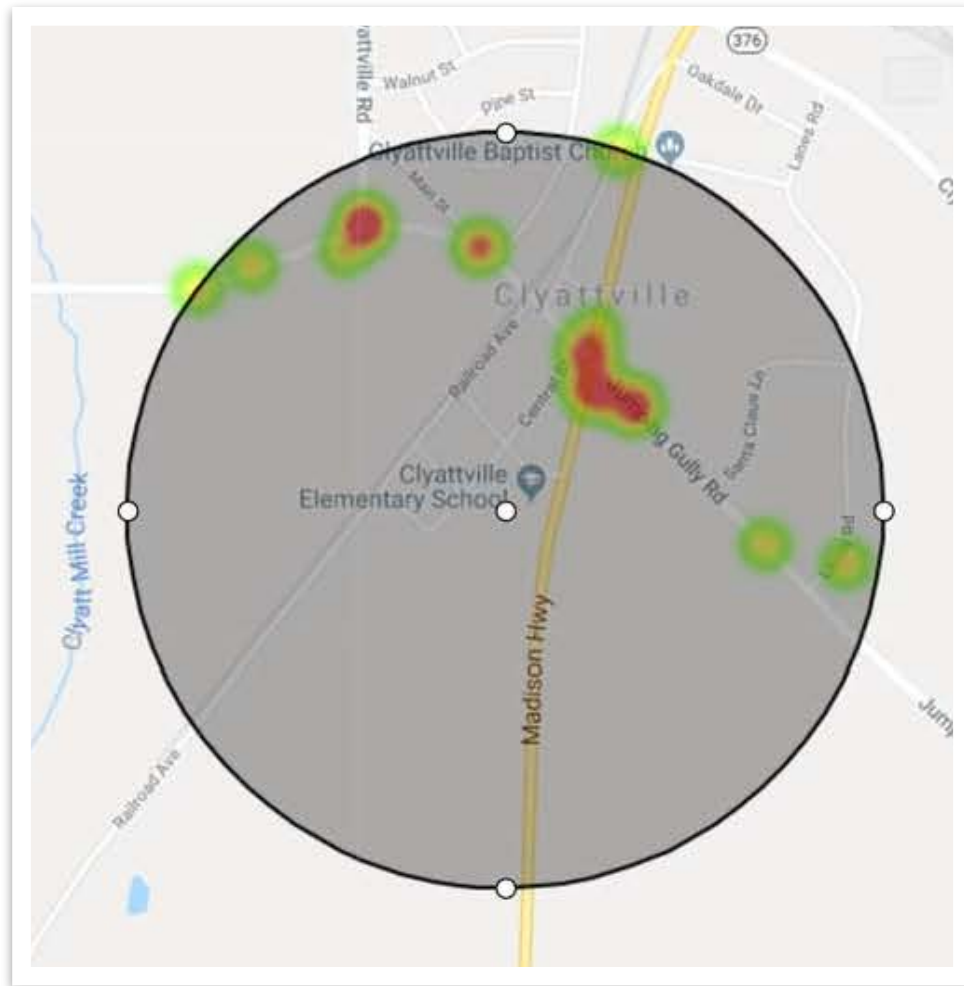
Pine Grove Campus

Between 2013 and 2017, ten crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Pine Grove Middle and Elementary School. Of these ten crashes, nine occurred during daylight hours, and one resulted in minor injuries. Five of the total crashes occurred during school dismissal hours (7:00 – 8:30 AM) and one during school dismissal hours (2:30 – 3:30 PM).



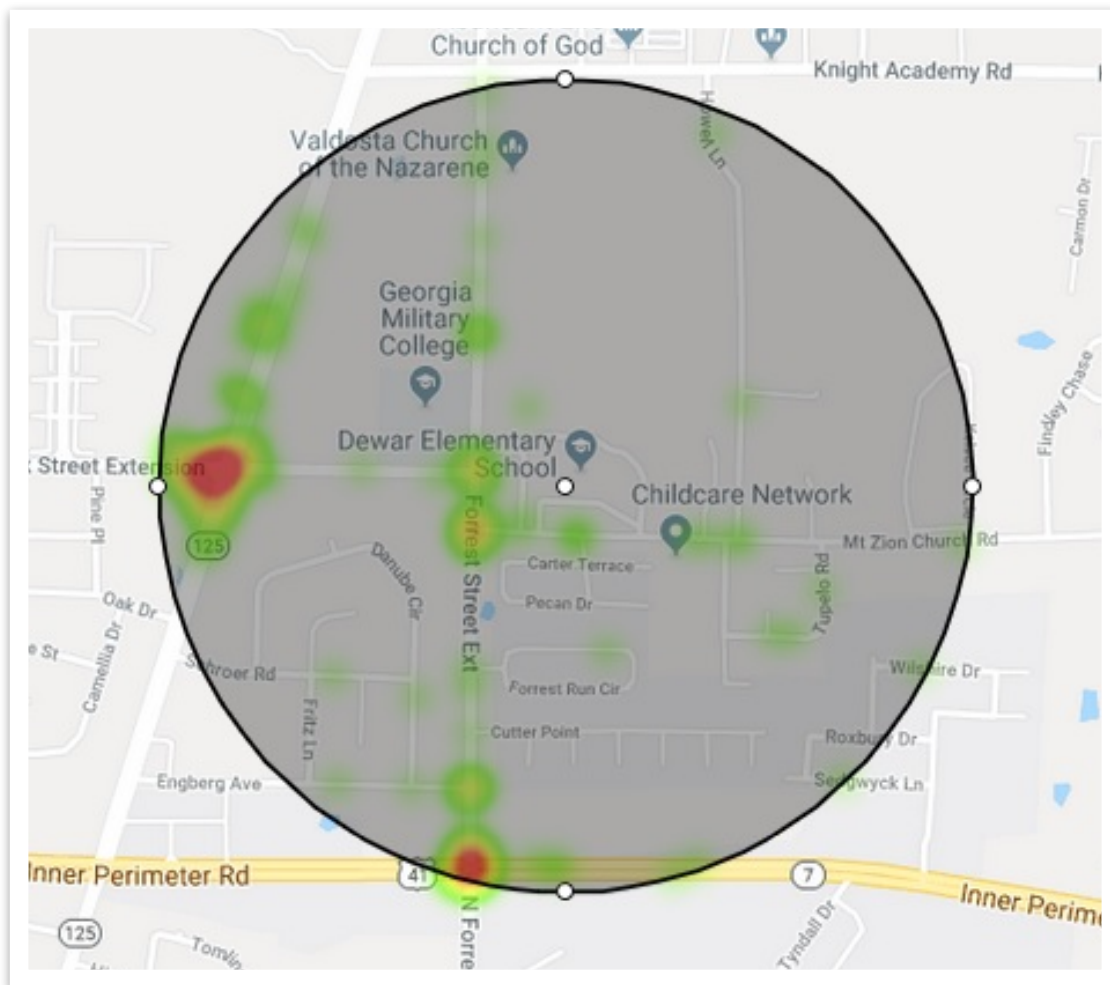
Clyattville Elementary School

Clyattville Elementary School is located at 5386 Madison Hwy. 23 crashes occurred within the school analysis area. 16 of these crashes occurred during daylight hours. Of these crashes, 2 crashes occurred during school arrival hours and 1 crash occurred during school dismissal hours.



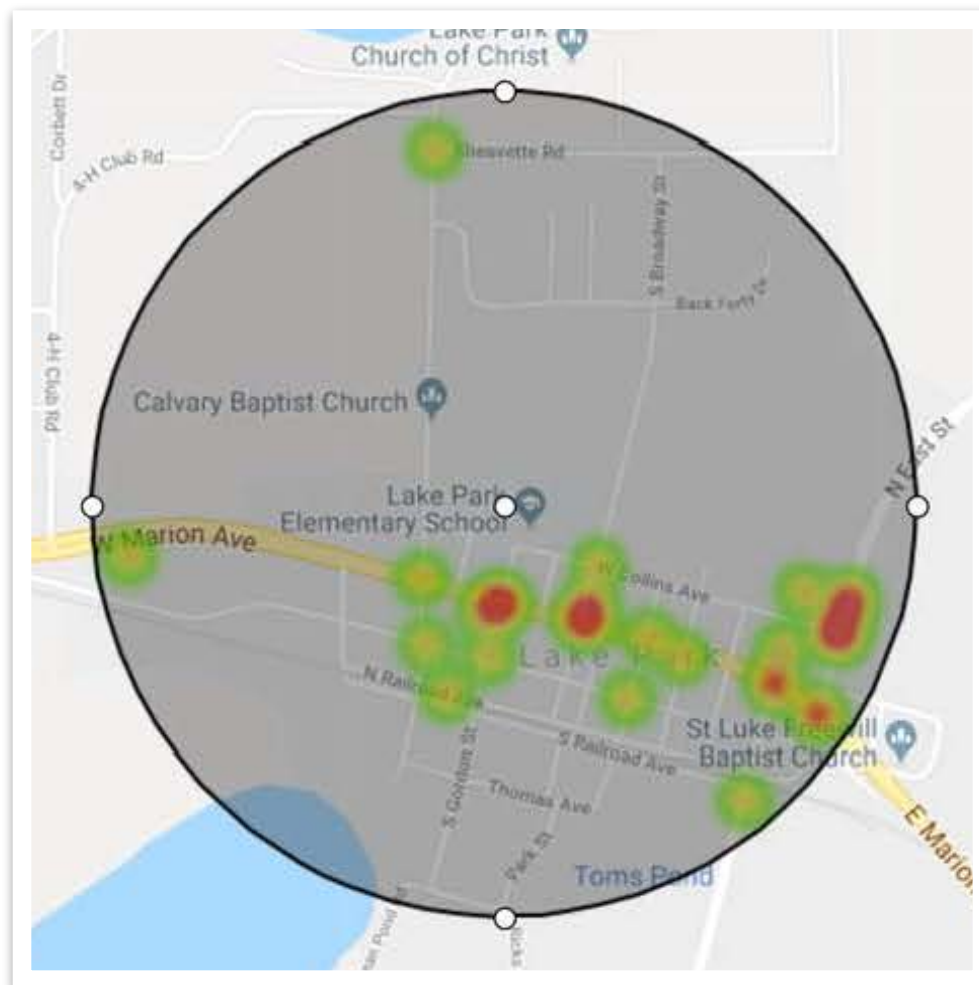
Dewar Elementary School

Dewar Elementary School is located off GA-41 on Mt Zion Church Road. 144 crashes occurred within the school analysis area of Dewar Elementary School. 106 of these crashes occurred during daylight hours. Of these crashes, 14 occurred during school arrival hours and 3 during school dismissal hours, a large number (24) of the total crashes transpired at the intersection of Mt. Zion Church Road and Bemiss. Additionally, there was a high volume (13) of injury crashes that occurred at the intersection of Knight Academy Road and Forrest Street Exit, in front of God's Children Childcare Center.



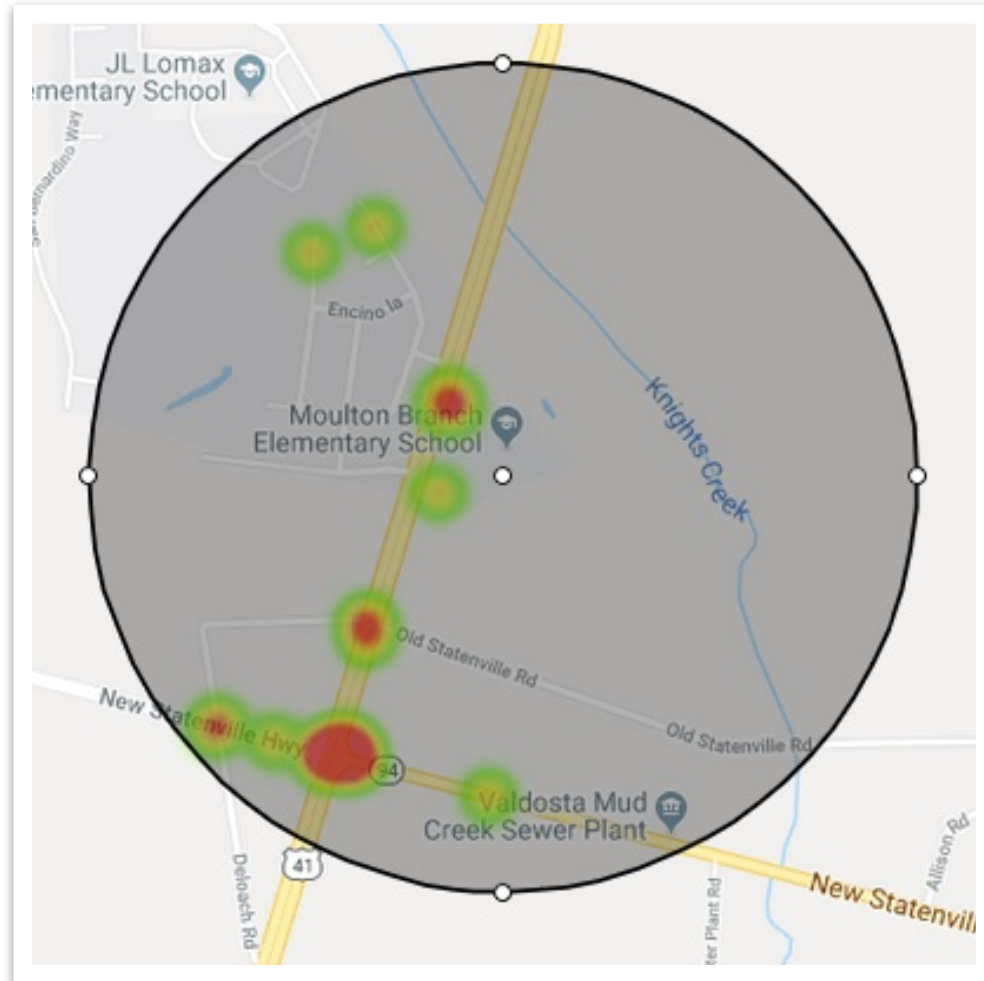
Lake Park Elementary School

22 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Lake Park Elementary School. Of these 22 crashes, 16 occurred during daylight, 2 resulted in minor injury, and 4 resulted in major injury. There was one crash that occurred during school arrival hours. A mother was dropping her children off at school when she neglected to put her vehicle in park and traveled backward, hitting the vehicle behind her.



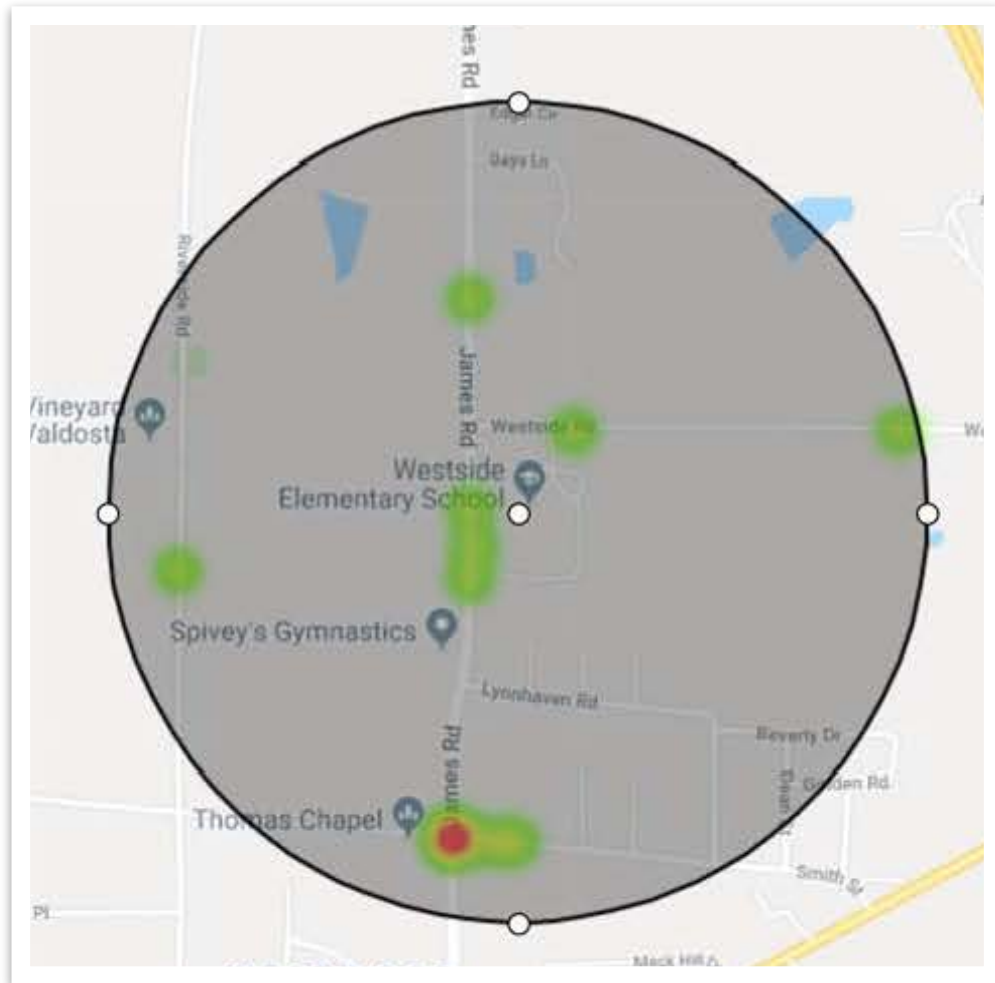
Moulton Branch Elementary School

Between 2013 and 2017, 21 crashes occurred within the school analysis area of Moulton Branch Elementary School. Of these 21 crashes, 18 occurred during daylight, 1 resulted in minor injury, and 4 resulted in serious injury. Slightly fewer than half (9) of the crashes occurred at the intersection of New Statenville Highway and Inner Perimeter Road. A total of 6 crashes occurred during school arrival hours (6:00 AM – 8:00 AM).



Westside Elementary School

Westside Elementary School is located outside the Valdosta city limits along James Road off Georgia Highway 84. There were a total of 10 crashes that occurred within a ½ mile radius of Westside Elementary. Of these crashes, 4 resulted in injury, however none occurred during the school travel period. Because there have been so many injuries in this area additional study may be needed to reduce overall traffic crashes in this area.



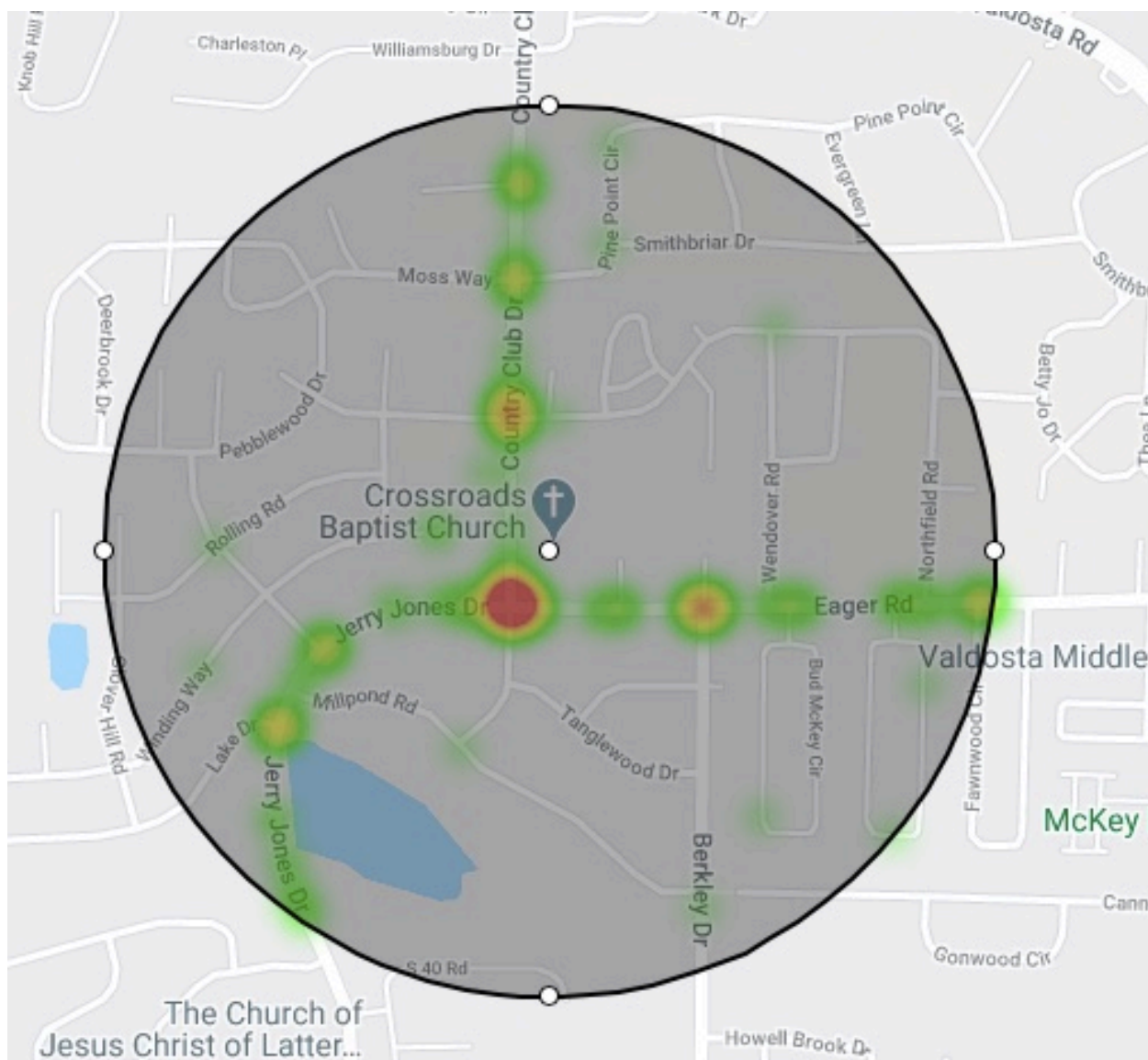
Lowndes County Private Schools

There are a total of 9 private schools in Lowndes County. This includes 9 elementary, 7 middle schools, and 7 high schools. Due to private schools having varying arrival/dismissal times, this study assumes that the arrival time for the private schools is between 7:30 AM and 8:30 AM and the dismissal time is 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM, unless specified otherwise.

Scintilla Charter Academy (a publicly-funded charter school) is included with JL Newbern Middle School (City of Valdosta Schools) due to their close proximity to one another.

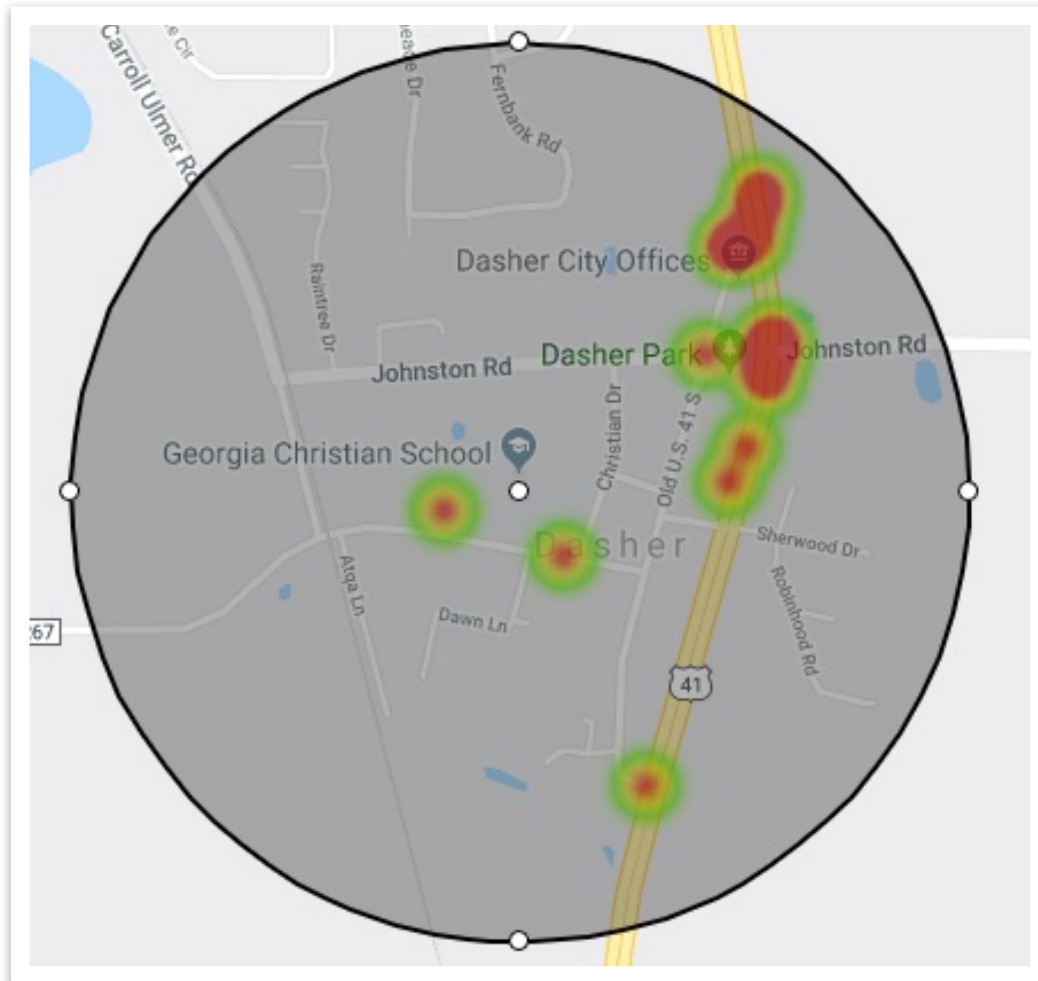
Crossroads Baptist

Between 2013 and 2017, there were 170 crashes within a ½ mile radius of Crossroads Baptist School. 115 of these crashes occurred during daylight hours. A large number (57) of these crashes occurred at the intersection of Country Club Drive and Eager Road. Of the total 170 crashes, six occurred during school dismissal hours (2:00 – 6:00 PM) and four during school arrival hours (6:00 – 8:00 AM). The primary contributing factor of the crashes was tailgating or following too closely. The most common type of collision was a rear-ending collision with another vehicle. Of the total crashes, eight resulted in minor injury. One incident involved a pedestrian and resulted in 1 minor injury. One crash involved wildlife.



Georgia Christian School

Georgia Christian School is located outside the Valdosta City limits along Christian Drive off GA-41. 14 crashes occurred within a ½ mile of the school. These crashes included 11 property related crashes, 10 daylight crashes, 5 minor injury crashes, and 2 serious injury crashes. There was one property related crash that occurred during school dismissal hours (7:30 AM – 8:30 AM).



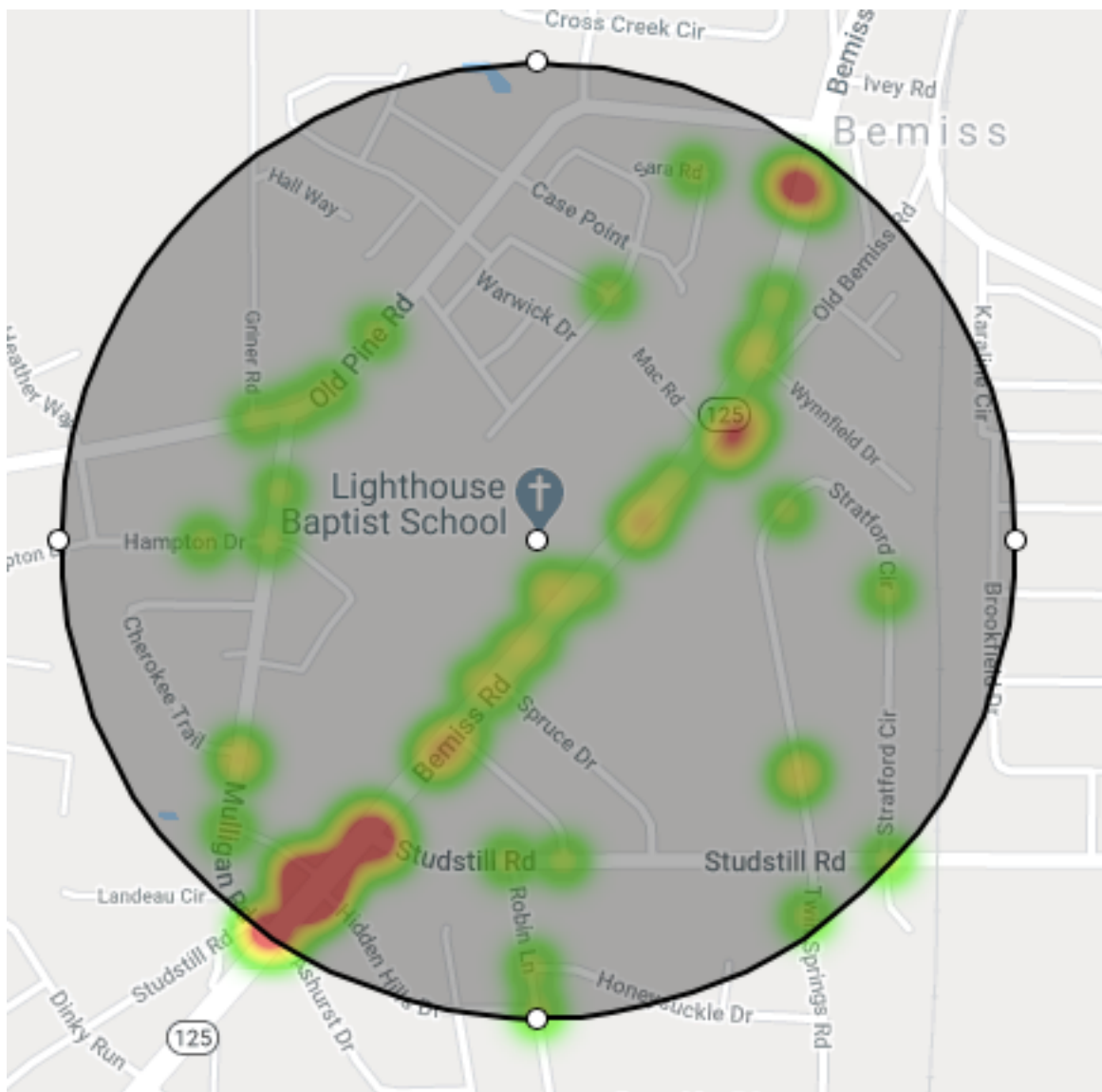
Highland Christian Academy

Highland Christian Academy is located off of Bemiss Road on Cat Creek Road. This is a new location for this school (previously located on E. Hill Ave.) since around 2016, however this same building was used as the former Pine Grove Elementary School for decades before this. There is a brief period during this study period when no classes were held at this campus. There were a total of 43 property related crashes, 39 daylight crashes, and 21 injury crashes that occurred within the school analysis area of Highland Christian Academy. There was one crash that occurred during school arrival hours (7:30 AM – 8:30 AM).



Lighthouse Baptist

Between 2013 and 2017, 73 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Lighthouse Baptist. Of these crashes, 50 occurred during daylight hours, 7 resulted in minor injury, and 5 resulted in serious injury. There is a noteworthy cluster of crashes in front of the nearby church, Gonwood Church of Christ. A total of 21 crashes transpired in proximity to Gonwood Church of Christ. This is likely a result of the church being near the intersection of Bemiss Road and Mulligan Road. A total of 2 crashes occurred during typical school arrival hours and 5 during typical school dismissal hours. At 2:30 PM a pedestrian was injured in a crash and suffered minor injuries. There was no noteworthy cause of the crash. There were a total of 3 crashes involving motorcyclist and 5 involving wildlife. There were no crashes that involved bicyclist or fatalities.



Open Bible Christian School

Open Bible Christian School is located off of N Oak Street Extension at Open Bible Cir. Between 2013 and 2017, 62 property-related crashes, 67 daylight crashes, and 18 injury crashes occurred within a ½ mile of Open Bible Christian School. The majority of accidents transpired along N Oak Street Extension. 2 of the injury crashes occurred during school arrival hours (7:30 AM – 8:30 AM). The first crash occurred at 7:41 AM and involved a DUI driver striking the rear end of another vehicle.



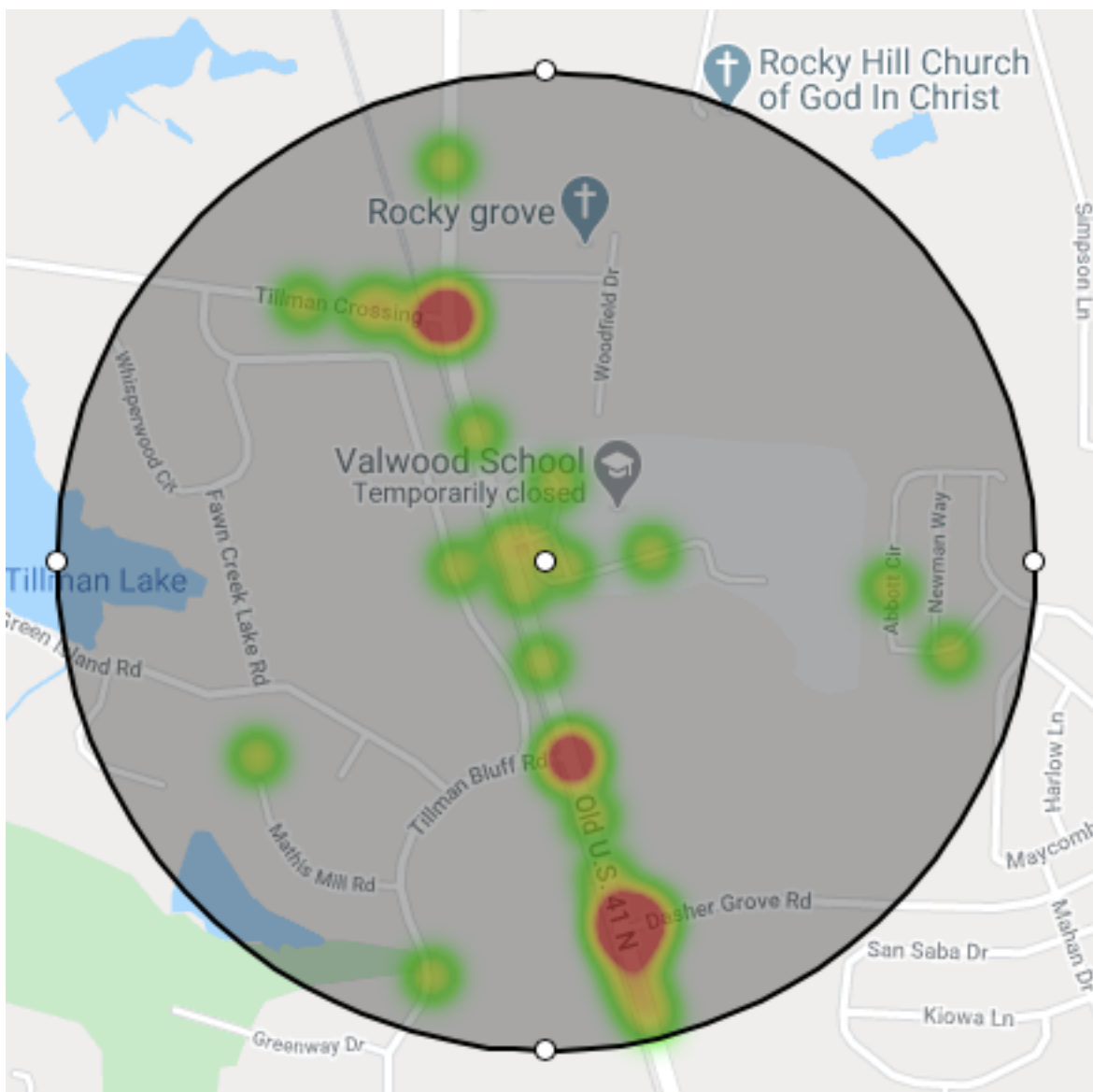
St. John Catholic School

Between 2013 and 2017, there were 144 property-related crashes, 125 daylight crashes, 28 complaint injury crashes, 8 minor injury crashes, and 2 injury crashes that occurred within the school analysis area of St. John's School. This high volume of crashes is likely due to the school being close to the intersection of Gornito Road and Jerry Jones; 79 of the crashes within a ½ mile perimeter of St. John School were isolated to the nearby intersection Jerry Jones Drive and Gornito Road.



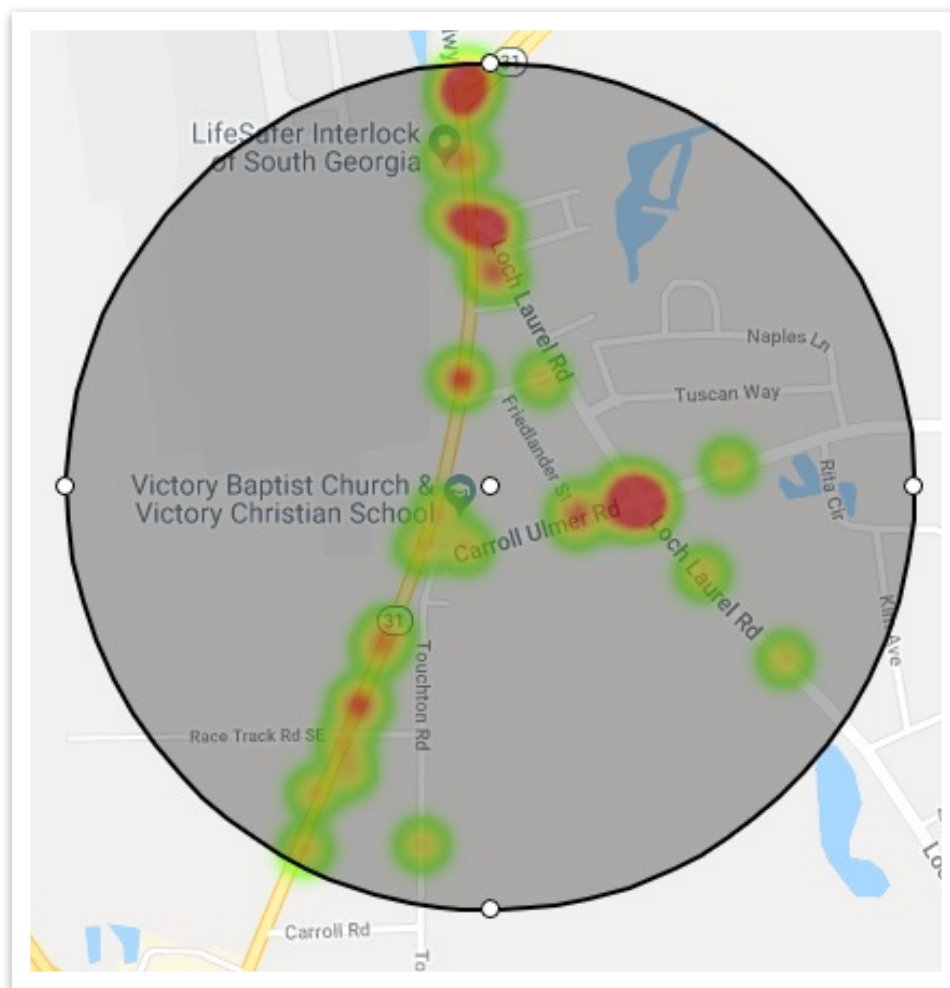
Valwood School

Between 2013 and 2017, 53 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Valwood School. Of these crashes, 45 occurred during daylight or dark, but lighted conditions, 12 resulted in minor injuries, and 9 resulted in serious injuries. 3 crashes occurred on the school property and 2 crashes occurred at the school entrance. There were a total of 8 crashes that occurred during typical school arrival hours (6:00 – 8:00AM) and 6 that occurred during regular school dismissal hours (2:00 – 3:30PM). 13 of the crashes involved drivers aged 16 – 18; 2 of these crashes occurred during school arrival hours.



Victory Christian School

Between 2013 and 2017, 39 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Victory Christian School. Of these crashes, 27 occurred during daylight hours, 2 resulted in minor injury, and 10 resulted in serious injury. There were a total of 2 crashes that occurred during typical school arrival hours* (6:00 – 8:00 AM) and 4 that occurred during regular school dismissal hours (2:00 – 3:30 PM). There was 1 crash involving a motorcyclist. Reportedly, the crash was a hit & run. The driver of a truck had failed to look to his left and hit the motorcyclist when the truck driver turned to his left. There were 3 crashes involving wildlife. There were no crashes involving pedestrians, bicyclists, or fatalities.



Valdosta City Schools

A total of 10 public schools and 7,100 students make up the City of Valdosta School system. This includes 5 elementary, 2 middle schools, 2 other schools, and 1 high school. The first class at Valdosta schools begins at 7:45AM, and school dismissal occurs between 2:30PM and 3:30PM. For this reason, this report considers 7:00 – 8:00AM to be school arrival hours and 2:00 – 4:00PM to be school dismissal hours.

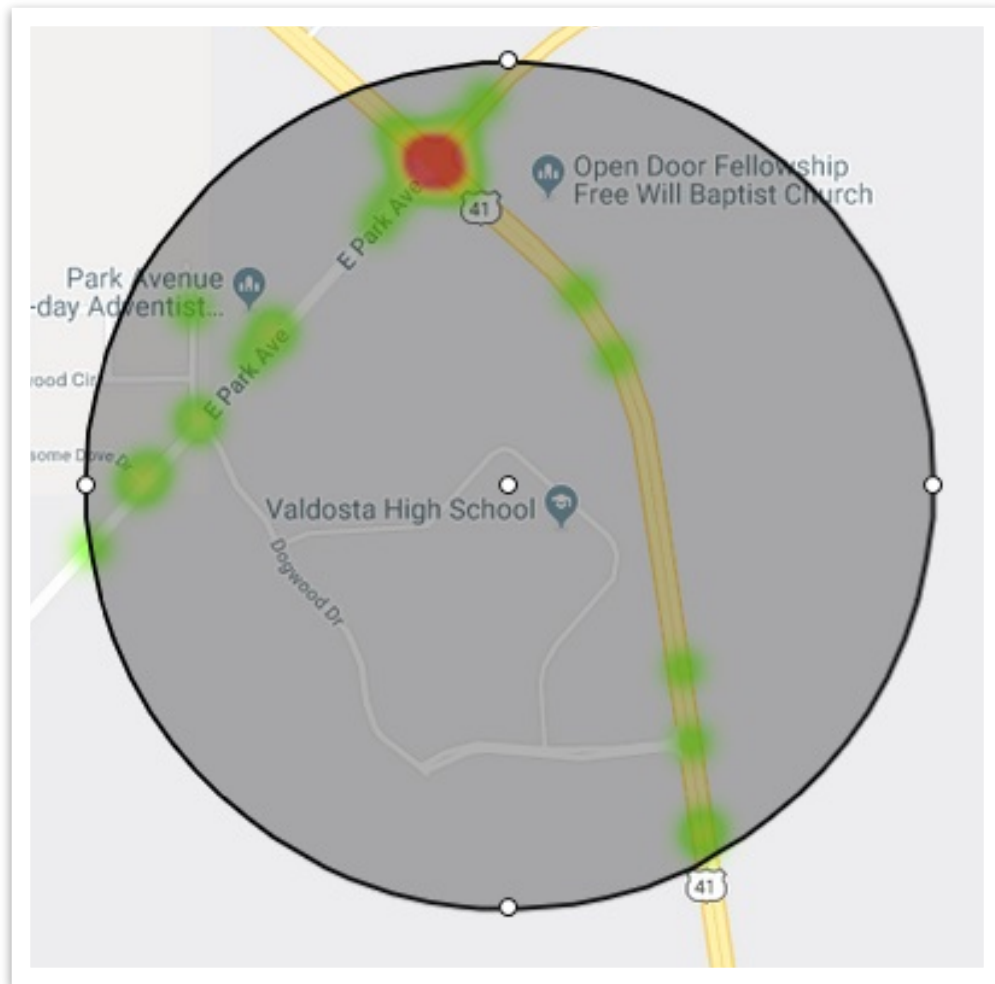
The area around Valdosta City schools was found to be generally free from major incident. The exceptions to this are schools that are located next to highways or heavy traffic areas, such as major intersections. Furthermore, there were few crashes that directly involved or were related to the schools or school children. The majority of the crashes were reportedly due to tailgating or failure to signal properly.

Scintilla Charter Academy (a private, publicly-funded charter school) is included with J.L Newbern due to their close proximity.

Valdosta High School

Valdosta High School is located off GA-41 on Inner Perimeter Road. 39 crashes occurred within a ½ mile of Valdosta High School. The vast majority of (39) these crashes occurred at the intersection of E Park Avenue and GA-41. Of the 39 total crashes, five occurred during school arrival hours (6:00 – 8:00 AM) and two during school dismissal hours (2:00 – 3:30 PM). There was 1 crash reportedly caused by an underage driver.

NOTE: The new location of Valdosta High School was recently opened April 14, 2018. As a result, the impact of school-related traffic on these roadways is not clearly evident at this time.



JL Newbern Middle School & Scintilla Charter Academy

JL Newbern Middle School and Scintilla Charter Academy are two adjacent schools. As such, they are treated as a single campus for the purpose of crash analysis. 31 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Scintilla Charter Academy and JL Newbern Middle School; however, more than 1/3 of the crashes transpired at the nearby three-way junction of Northside Drive and Jaycee Shack Road. Of the 31 total crashes, 25 were property related crashes and 17 were daylight crashes. 1 crash occurred during school arrival hours (7:30 – 8:30AM).

These data include both JL Newbern Middle School and Scintilla Charter Academy due to their close proximity to one another.



Valdosta Middle School

Between 2013 and 2017, 785 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Valdosta Middle School. These crashes resulted in a total of 355 injuries and no fatalities. 30 of the crashes occurred during the morning drop-off period and 46 occurred during the afternoon pick-up period. Two of the crashes involved pedestrians/bicyclists and resulted in injuries. One of the victims was not school-aged, and the other victims' ages were not identified. Because of the close proximity of this school to the intersection of several high-volume roadways, the vast majority of crashes do not appear to be related to the school in any manner. Valdosta Middle School currently uses crossing guards for students at the intersections of Burton Drive with N. Oak St. and N. Patterson St. and should continue to do so to help ensure the safety of students and the motoring public near this location.



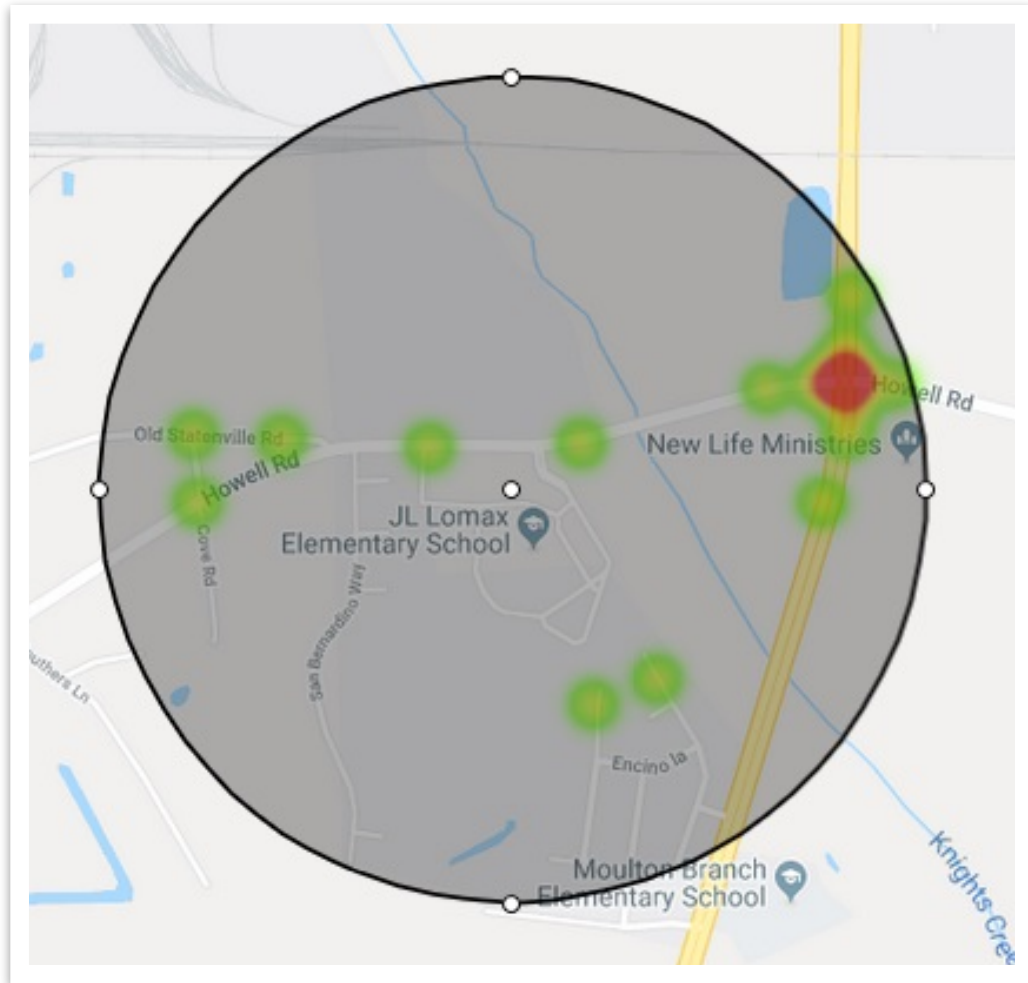
Horne Learning Center

Between 2013 and 2017, 158 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Horne Learning Center. These crashes resulted in a total of 96 injuries and 1 fatality (the fatality was not related to school traffic). Six of the crashes occurred during the morning drop-off period and eight occurred during the afternoon pick-up period. Four of the crashes involved pedestrians/bicyclists and resulted in injuries, the ages of the children involved in these crashes ranged from 8 to 13, and the other individuals involved were adults. These pedestrian/bicycle crashes did not occur near the school, but occurred in the afternoon after school would have been over for the day.



J.L. Lomax Elementary School

Between 2013 and 2017, 28 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of JL Lomax Elementary School. Of these 28 crashes, 16 occurred during daylight, 4 resulted in minor injury, and 9 resulted in serious injury. The vast majority (20) of the crashes were isolated to the intersection of Howell Road and Inner Perimeter Road. There were a total of 2 crashes that occurred during school arrival hours (6:00 AM – 8:00 AM) and 2 during school dismissal hours (2:00 PM – 3:00 PM).



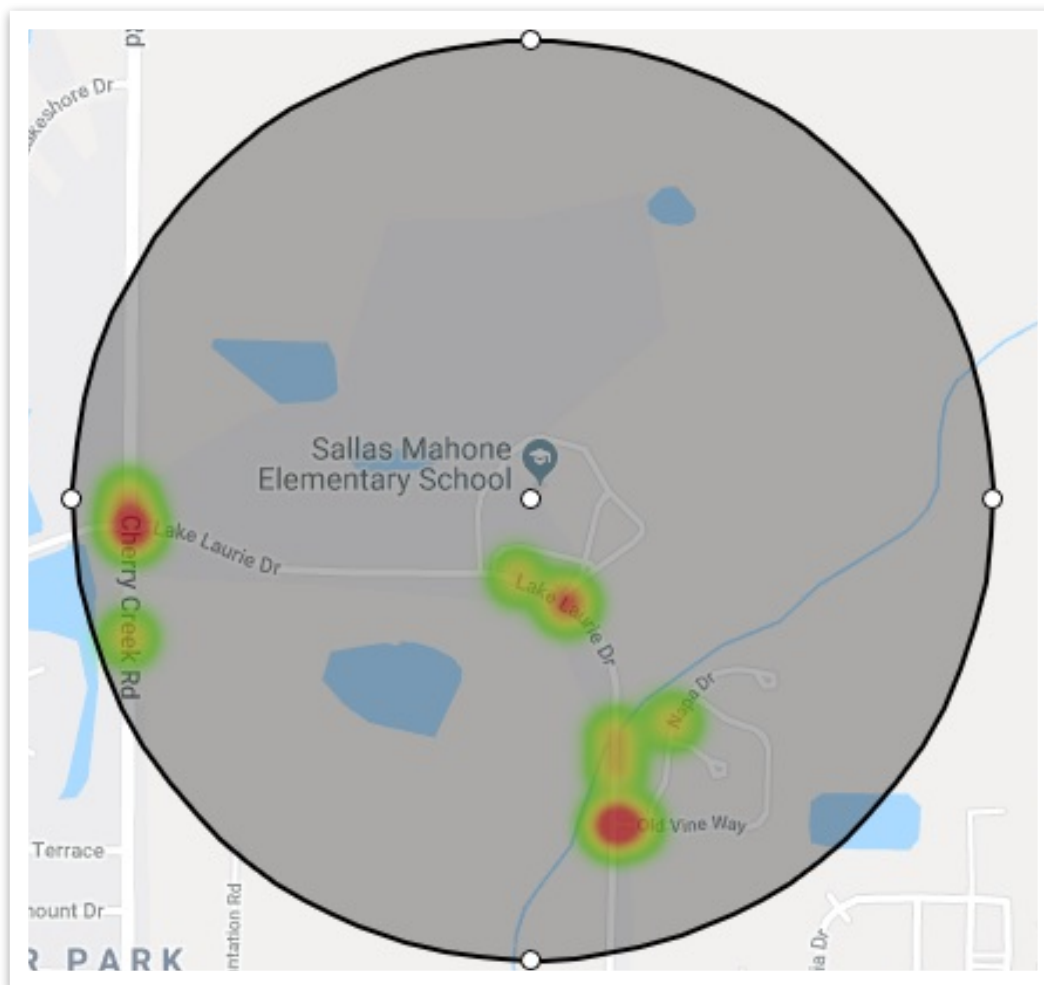
Pinevale Elementary School

Pinevale Elementary School is located just south of downtown Valdosta on Lake Park Road. There were a total of 183 property related crashes, 144 crashes that occurred during daylight, and 17 injury crashes within the school analysis area.



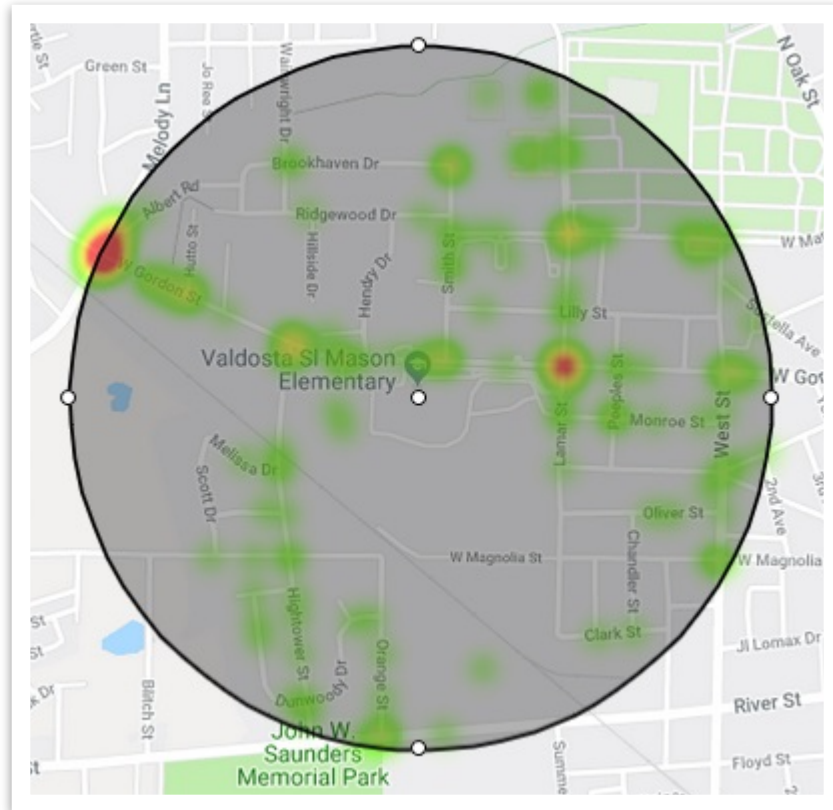
Sallas Mahone Elementary School

Between 2013 and 2017, 11 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of Sallas Mahone Elementary School. Of these crashes, 6 occurred during daylight hours. There was 1 crash that involved in a motorcyclist and resulted in a fatality. Reportedly, at 1:30PM the motorcyclist was having difficulties negotiating a turn and went off the road, crashing into a ditch. There were no crashes involving pedestrians, bicyclists, animals, or DUIs.



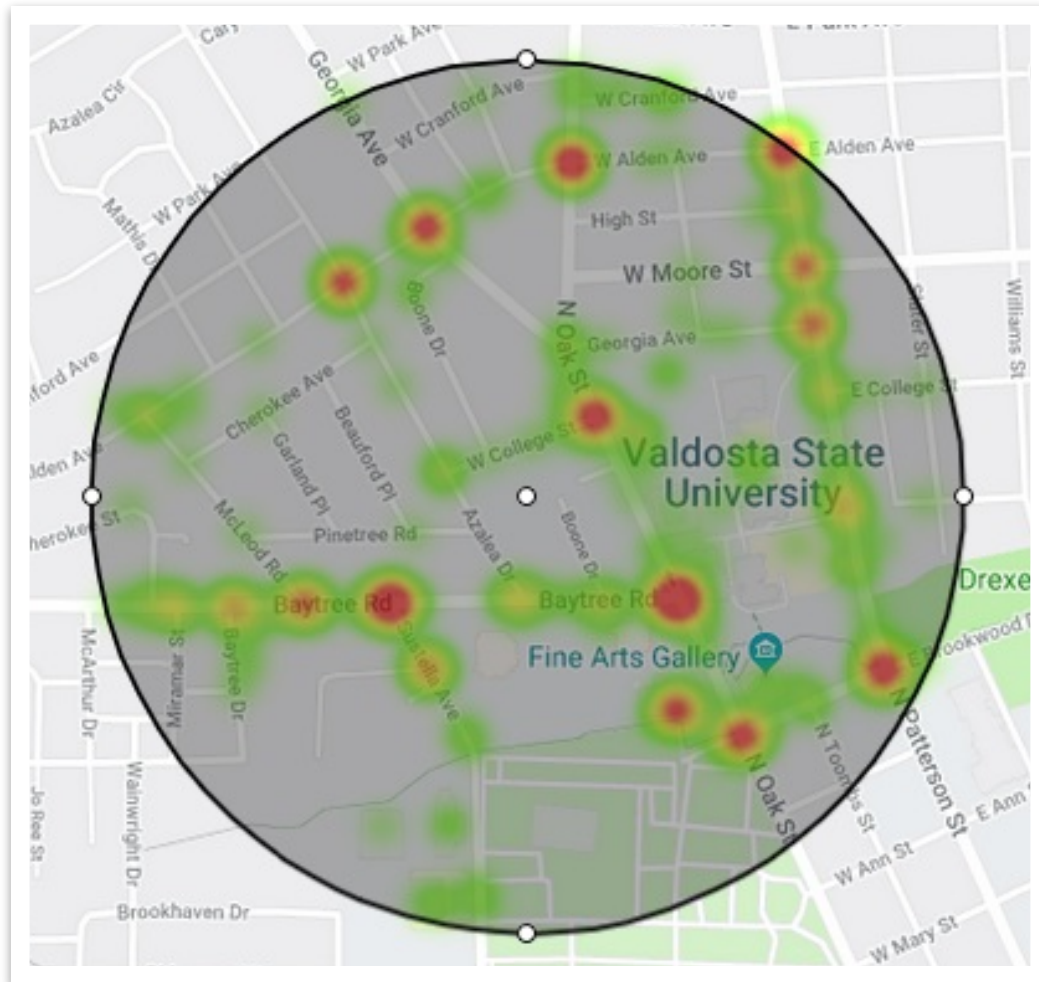
S.L. Mason Elementary

Between 2013 and 2017, 192 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of SL Mason Elementary. Of these 192 crashes, 108 occurred during daylight, and 7 resulted in minor injury. A high volume (69) of the crashes were concentrated to the nearby intersection of W Gordon St and Melody Lane. There were a total of 6 crashes that occurred during school dismissal hours (2:00 – 3:30 PM). Excluding a hit-and-run that occurred at 3:12 PM, there were no notable causes of the crashes other than following too closely or improper turning. Four crashes involved DUI, one crash involved a cyclist, two involved motorcyclists, and one involved wildlife. There were no fatalities.



Valdosta Early College Academy

Between 2013 and 2017, 479 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of the VECA Campus. 193 injuries resulted, as well as one fatality (the fatality was not related to school traffic). 20 of the crashes occurred during the morning drop-off period and 46 of the crashes occurred during the afternoon pick-up period. A pedestrian/bicycle crash did occur in the area that resulted in a school-aged child having no injuries.



W.G. Nunn Elementary School

Between 2013 and 2017, 233 crashes occurred within a ½ mile radius of WG Nunn Elementary School. Of these 233 crashes, 128 occurred during daylight, 10 resulted in minor injury, and two resulted in serious injury. A significant amount (56) of the crashes were concentrated around the intersection of E Park Ave and N Forrest Street. A total of 13 crashes occurred during school arrival hours (6:00 AM – 8:00 AM) and 10 during school arrival hours (2 PM – 3:30 PM). Reportedly, the majority of the crashes were due to tailgating.

