

3-2009

## Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index Annual Report, 2007

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# Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index Annual Report

2007 Data

Released: March, 2009

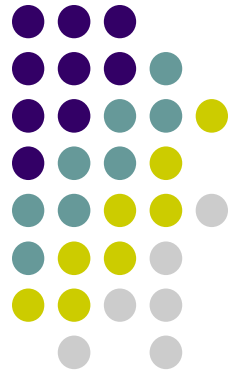
Produced by Our Community's Children

In Partnership with the

Community Research Institute  
Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy  
and Nonprofit Leadership  
Grand Valley State University

and the

Grand Rapids Police Department



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## Acknowledgements

This report was prepared on behalf of Our Community's Children and the City of Grand Rapids with the help of the Grand Rapids Police Department. The core development, analysis, and writing team for the report included:

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# Executive Summary

## 0.1 Purpose of this Report

In November, 2007, Our Community's Children<sup>1</sup> and the Community Research Institute at Grand Valley State University released the findings from an initial exploration of data relating to juvenile crime and delinquency in the City of Grand Rapids. These findings, comprising the *Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index*<sup>2</sup>, were produced from data on Grand Rapids Police Department reports of arrests and contact reports for crimes, status offenses, and family domestic incidents.

This report presents juvenile offense index data for the period from January 1 through December 31, 2007. It provides data and information on juvenile offenses by youth aged 8–16 who are city residents. Data is presented both at citywide and neighborhood levels.

## 0.2 Data

The primary data analyzed for this report include offenses recorded by the Grand Rapids Police Department for incidents that (1) involved one or more juveniles who are residents of Grand Rapids; and (2) occurred within the Grand Rapids city limits. Incidents included cover offense dates occurring within the 2007 calendar year.

Young offenders come to the attention of law enforcement while officers are on patrol or if a call is made from the public to respond. It is the police officer who determines the nature of the crime and how and when it is reported. As such, the data presented reflects police reporting. Analyses have excluded field contacts

<sup>1</sup>formerly known as the City of Grand Rapids' Office of Children, Youth & Families

<sup>2</sup>Chartkoff, S.B., Rotondaro, G., Heemstra, L., & Porter, P. (2007). *Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index 2006 Report*. Available online at [www.cridata.org](http://www.cridata.org).

in which the police are investigating suspicious behavior as well as incidents in which the police are assisting citizens or other agencies.

For purposes of this analysis, the reported offenses were categorized into three key areas: family domestic issues, status offenses (including curfew violations and runaway behavior), and juvenile criminal offenses resulting in an arrest. Only youth aged 8–16 are considered in this analysis; children under 8 years old cannot be arrested for a crime in the state of Michigan, and youth aged 17 and older are considered adults under current statutes.

While the analysis presented in this report builds upon and updates the baseline data from the prior report, it will take at least one more year of data before trends can be discerned with any confidence. As such, we advise caution in comparing the data between this report and the 2006 GRJOI numbers. In addition, since the index is based on police report data (which is itself dependent on local law enforcement practices, the extent to which crimes are reported to the police, and other factors), changes in these factors should be considered as potential confounding influences when interpreting the findings.

## 0.3 Summary of Findings

The 2007 Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index (GRJOI) shows that there were 1,559 youth aged 8–16 involved in 2,299 index-eligible crimes, status offenses, and family domestic incidents as documented by police. These figures represent a 9% overall decline in unique youth and a 13% reduction in the number of documented youth offenses in comparison with 2006. Notably, the number of both crime offenses and unique youth involved in crime offense was 20% lower in 2007 in comparison with the 2006 baseline.

While these numbers are encouraging, it is too soon to tell whether they represent a significant trend in reduced juvenile crime and delinquency, or whether they are the result of random fluctuations or other factors such as level of law enforcement activity.

Certain general patterns uncovered in the 2006 baseline report continue to appear within the 2007 data. Specifically:

**1. After-school and mid-evening hours remain prime times for youth offenses.**

Last year's findings highlighted a pattern of increased youth crime after school and into the early evening hours on school days. This finding held in the current analysis year, with noticeable spikes in juvenile crime offenses in the hours between 2 and 4 pm on school days and between 6 and 9 pm on both school and non-school days.

**2. Juvenile involvement in offenses increases dramatically between 13 and 14 years of age.**

The early teen years, between the ages of 13 and 14, continue to show the most dramatic increase in delinquent behavior. This consistent pattern highlights the importance of looking at prevention and early intervention strategies during this critical developmental period.

**3. Disorderly conduct, assaults, and retail fraud represent the most common types of youth crime offenses.**

For the second year in a row, youth arrests for criminal offenses most frequently involved disorderly conduct, assaults, and incidents of retail fraud. These three types of offense accounted for 48% of all offenses for which a youth was arrested in 2007.

**4. Non-criminal offenses make up a majority of police contacts with youth.**

Of all offenses documented in 2007, 39% were crimes, 47% were status offenses, and 14% were family domestic incidents. The prevalence of these non-crime offenses – particularly those involving juvenile runaways or family domestic troubles – highlight strained parent-child relations and the potential need for family and parenting resources.

# Data, Methods, and Key Concepts in the GRJOI

## 1.1 Data Sources

This report provides the community with data and information on the level of juvenile offenses by city youth in Grand Rapids for 2007. The data is derived from the Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD) incident reports for the period of January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007. Data is provided to CRI under a data sharing agreement with GRPD. As with the 2006 GRJOI report, population figures from the 2000 Census were used to translate actual offense and youth involvement counts into estimated rates per 1000 youth.

## 1.2 Key Concepts

This report describes patterns related to both individual juveniles (people) and juvenile offenses (actions) over the course of the 2007 calendar year. An explanation of key concepts used throughout this report and how they relate to one another is provided below.

**Offense:** An administrative description/code used to categorize an event of a particular type in which the police have responded. Although the word “offense” might imply a criminal act, offenses can be *either* criminal or non-criminal. For example, Burglary, Trespassing, Field Contact Report, and Medical/Emergency Assist are all offense codes; however, whereas Burglary and Trespassing are criminal offenses, Field Contacts and general assistance calls are not. For the purposes of this report, the only non-criminal offenses included are Family Domestic Incidents — offenses in which a family conflict has escalated to the point where police assistance is requested, but where physical violence or other criminal acts have not been committed.

**Incident:** An event involving police which results in a written report. One or more offenses can be docu-

mented as part of an incident report.

**Juvenile:** A youth under 17 years of age. For this report, offenses are only reported for youth between the ages of 8 and 16. Although youth of any age can be considered a victim of a crime, a person under eight years old cannot be arrested for a crime according to Michigan State Law. One or more juveniles may be involved in any given incident or offense, and a single juvenile may be involved in or commit any number of offenses over the course of a given period of time.

**Arrest:** For the purposes of this report, a juvenile is considered “arrested” for an offense if he/she is taken to juvenile detention, given a ticket to appear in court, brought to a responsible guardian by police, or petitioned to juvenile court.

## 1.3 Composition of the Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index

The Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index, developed and discussed in detail in the 2006 report, identifies frequency and rates of juvenile crime/delinquency by aggregating data around core offenses of interest. GRPD offense records specifically excluded from analysis include those which represent normal field contacts, documented interactions for issues not tied to delinquency or criminal activity (e.g., requests for police assistance), and police activities related to support of other law enforcement agencies or jurisdictions.

Actual offense names and codes used by law enforcement agencies are often quite detailed in order to reflect nuances in the severity, mode, or circumstances in which an offense was committed; in 2007, over 400 distinct offense codes were represented in the raw data provided by the police department. For the purposes

of analysis, these offense codes are condensed into 45 meaningful offense titles that conform with standard law enforcement classifications. These offenses fall into three broad categories that can provide important information about what risks youth are facing and about certain kinds of trouble that they are getting into:

1. Crimes against other persons or property
2. Status offenses
3. Family domestic incidents

**Crime offenses** are acts that are illegal under state laws or municipal ordinance. Only offenses in which an actual arrest of a juvenile was made are included in the GRJOI for crimes. Crime Offenses were further subclassified as Violent, Property, Drug-Related, and Other Crimes.

- **Violent crimes** are criminal acts committed by one person against another. Some examples are Robbery, Assault & Battery, and Murder.
- **Property crimes** are criminal acts committed against someone's property. Some examples are Burglary, Larceny, and Retail Fraud (shoplifting).
- **Drug related** offenses are criminal acts involving controlled substances. Some examples are Possession of Marijuana and Possession of Crack Cocaine.
- **Other crimes** are criminal acts that do not meet the criteria above. Some examples are Driving Offenses, Trespassing, and Creating a Disturbance.

**Status offenses** are acts which are considered unlawful because of a person's status as a minor. There are typically three common status offenses that are discussed in relation to juvenile crime and delinquency: Curfew Violation, Juvenile Runaway, and Truancy.

- A **curfew violation** occurs when a minor is "out and about" in public without adult supervision, after a specific time of night. The time at which a juvenile is considered in violation of curfew depends on the juvenile's age. According to current City ordinance on juvenile curfews, children under 12 years should be at home and/or under adult supervision by 10 pm; youth 13-15 years of age by 11 pm; and youth 16-17 years of age by midnight.

- A **juvenile runaway** offense occurs when a minor leaves his residence with out permission of his parent or legal guardian.
- **Truancy** occurs when a juvenile under the age of 16 does not attend school at the times required.

As with the 2006 data, only curfew violations and juvenile runaway offenses were available for analysis in 2007. Truancy reports were not included in the data set. All offenses in which a juvenile runaway or curfew violation was recorded are included in the GRJOI for status offenses, regardless of whether a more formal "arrest" or court referral were made.

**Family domestic incidents** are incidents in which family conflicts have escalated to the point where the police have been called. Unlike a crime or status offense in which a youth is clearly committing a particular act, family domestic incidents cannot be attributed specifically to the youth in question – instead, they serve as a record of a *family* dynamic in which youth and/or adults are engaged in high levels of conflict in the home. While these incidents are not necessarily indicative of emotional or physical abuse or neglect, research has shown that these incidents, as well as status offenses, are more likely to occur when youth feel neglected or unsupported by their parents.

### 1.4 Limitations and Cautions

As multiple years of data for the GRJOI are gathered and analyzed, our ability to analyze patterns and identify trends increases. Although the data presented in this report updates the index for 2007, it is still too early to determine significant trends in juvenile crime and delinquency. A minimum of three years of data is the typical requirement to show if a particular benchmark is rising or falling. In addition, the analyses presented in this report only represent one part of the larger picture of juvenile crime and delinquency. It is important to balance this data with other data and insights about the community context, including community services, environmental conditions, and the state of our city.

#### **Exclusion criteria related to reporting and data access.**

- The data only includes incidents of juvenile crime and delinquency that were reported to or detected



by the police. In areas in which juvenile crime and delinquency incidents are not reported to the police, the numbers presented in this report are likely to *underestimate* the number of offenses actually occurring. Research shows that residents of lower-income neighborhoods are less likely to call the police to make a report<sup>1</sup>. In addition, neighborhoods and communities may differ in how they view particular types of offenses, and reporting rates can vary by type offense.

- The data does not include information about juveniles living in Grand Rapids who were involved in incidents or events in other police jurisdictions – criminal incidents that were not responded to by GRPD. This data was not available at the level required for the analyses presented in this report. Thus, the analyses presented in this report can only speak to levels of juvenile crime and delinquency occurring *within* Grand Rapids, and do not include potential instances in which Grand Rapids youth residents engaged in crime or delinquency beyond city limits.
- For some offenses, the recording GRPD officer may have not noted the juvenile's age or date of birth at the time of the incident. While this is unlikely to occur for more serious offenses or those involving an actual arrest, it remains possible that some juvenile involvement in crime and delinquency may remain unrecorded. If an age or date of birth was not recorded as part of the officer's write up of an incident, we are unable to determine whether a juvenile was involved.

### **The role of policies, practices, and other enforcement factors**

Many factors influence the data analyzed in this report. While some variation in offense patterns is attributable to genuine differences in particular youth, other variations are just as or more likely to be the result of differences in local conditions, police practices, or other factors that have little or nothing to do with the youth involved. Therefore, when examining patterns of juvenile contacts with law enforcement officials, it is important to keep in mind that the rates of documented incidents are dependent on *both* youth behavior *and* police

practices. For example, a targeted effort in one specific area, a new policy, or additional environmental occurrences can all play a role in the number, timing, and location of offenses reported over a given year. The Grand Rapids Police Department continued its practice of summer curfew sweeps in 2007.

<sup>1</sup>Carr, P., Napolitano L., Keating, J. "We Never Call the Cops and Here is Why", *Criminology*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 2007

## Results of Analysis

In keeping with the basic set of indicators presented in the report of 2006 data, the current report provides descriptive statistics for juvenile crime in calendar year 2007 that address the following questions:

- How many youth got into trouble with the police in 2007? How many index offenses were committed?
- What *kinds* of trouble did our youth get into?
- To what extent did youth have repeat offenses or encounters documented within the calendar year?
- Which types of juvenile offenses were most prevalent?
- What time periods during the day pose the greatest risk for offending? What can the offense patterns tell us about needs for youth programs during the school year vs. the summer months?
- Where did offenses most commonly occur within the city of Grand Rapids?

### 2.1 Key GRJOI Indicators

In 2007, 1,559 individual youth were involved in one or more of the offenses included as part of the Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index (GRJOI). These youth include 278 children and juveniles involved in a Family Domestic Incident (i.e., a police call related to a family domestic disturbance); 897 juveniles involved in a status offense (e.g., curfew violation or juvenile runaway) and 719 who were arrested for a criminal offense.

Collectively, these youth were involved in a total of 2,299 unique offenses, of which 39% were crimes, 47% were status offenses, and 14% were family domestic incidents.

Table 2.1 on page 7 summarizes these figures as raw counts and as a rate per 1000 youth in the City of Grand Rapids per Census 2000 data.

Compared with prior year figures, these findings reflect a net decrease in number of youth arrested for a crime (20% decrease) or involved in a family domestic disturbance (15.5% decrease), but a slight increase in the number of youth with a documented status offense. Overall, the 2007 data reflects 9% fewer unique youth involved in an index offense compared with 2006.

The number of offenses reported for 2007 reflect a 13% decrease in comparison with 2006 figures. Crime offenses decreased 20%, while status offenses and family domestic incidents decreased 6% and 13%, respectively.

### 2.2 Age at Offense

Figure 2.1 on page 7 shows the trend in number of youth involved in an offense as a function of increasing age. This figure shows a pattern quite similar to that found in the 2006 data, indicating that the ages of 13 and 14 remain a critical period of increased risk for local youth to become engaged in delinquent behaviors.

### 2.3 Incidence of Repeat Offenses

Although fewer juveniles and offenses were recorded in 2007 than in 2006, the incidence of youth involved in repeat offenses increased. Figure 2.2 on page 8 illustrates the distribution of youth involved in 1, 2, and 3 or more offenses by type of offense. Whereas approximately 31% of those youth involved in a crime in 2006 were arrested more than once during the calendar year, this figure increased to 36.7% in 2007.

The 2007 data for Grand Rapids indicates that, within the course of the calendar year, relatively few youth were involved in multiple types of offenses across these three broad categories (Table 2.2 on page 9). Overall, these patterns are similar to those found in the 2006 data.

Table 2.1: 2007 Grand Rapids Juvenile Offense Index - Juveniles and Offenses (Counts and Rates per 1000 Youth).

Index Category	Number	Rate per 1000 Juveniles <sup>a</sup>
<b>Juveniles</b>		
- Total Unique Youth <sup>b</sup>	1559	61.4
- With arrest for a crime	719	28.3
- With documented status offense	897	35.3
- With documented family/domestic incident	278	10.9
<b>Offenses</b>		
- Total Unique Offenses	2299	90.5
- Crimes	893	35.2
- Status Offenses	1086	42.8
- Family/Domestic Incidents	320	12.6

<sup>a</sup> Based on Census 2000 estimates of population aged 8-16, Grand Rapids.

<sup>b</sup> Figures represent unduplicated counts within each heading and offense type. Due to a percentage of youth who engaged in multiple types of offense during 2007, the sum of youth involved in different types will be greater than the figure for Total Unique Youth.

Youth Involved by Age and Offense Type – 2007

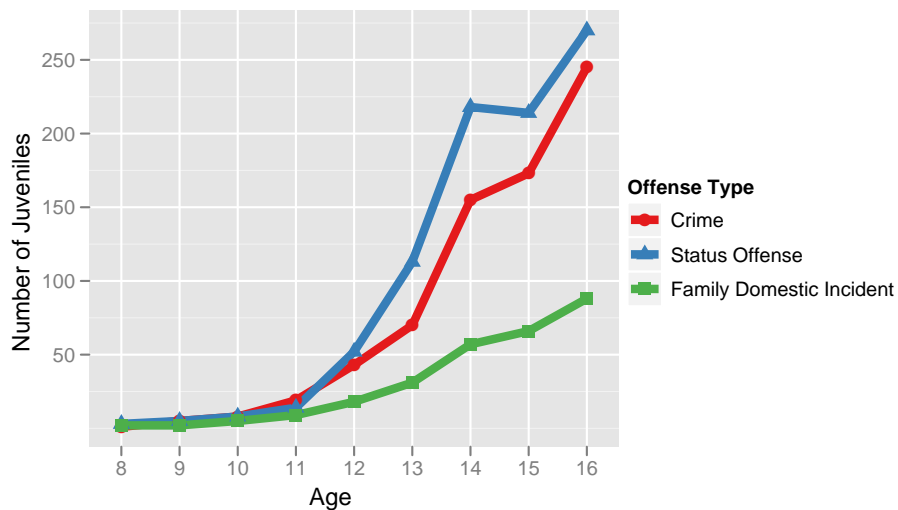


Figure 2.1: Number of juveniles involved in at least one criminal or status offense or family domestic incident in 2007 by age.

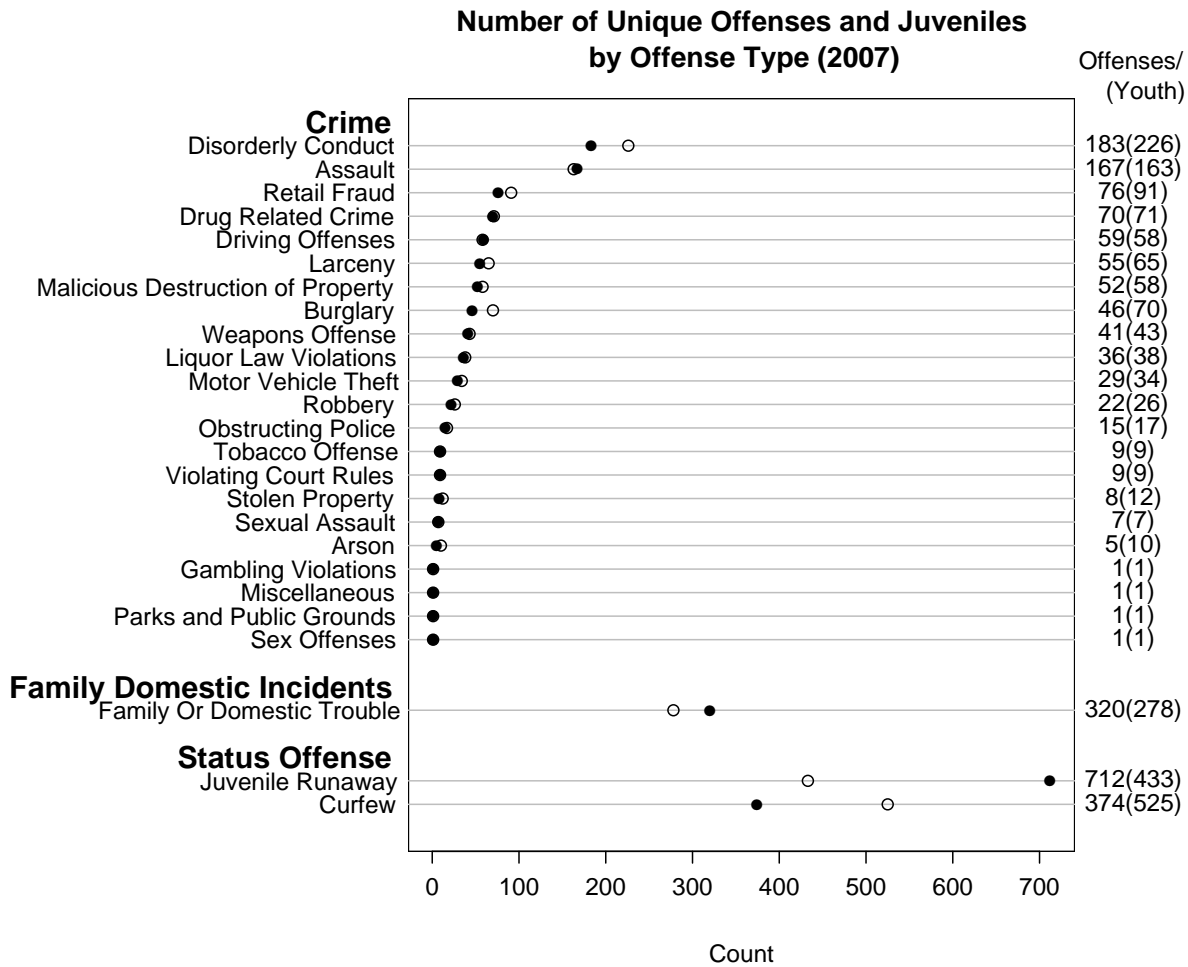


Figure 2.3: Counts of offense by type. Solid dots represent number of offenses; hollow dots represent number of juveniles involved in these offenses.

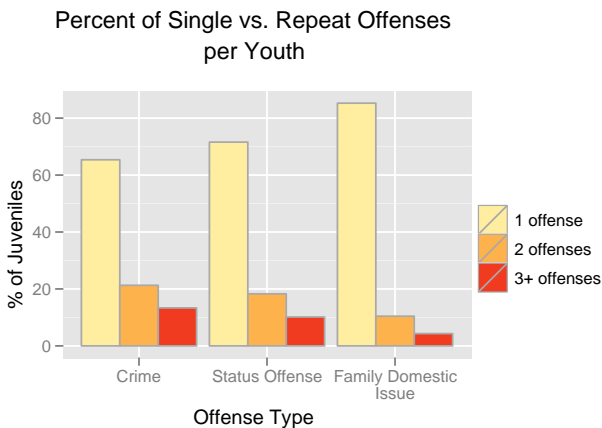


Figure 2.2: Percentage of juveniles documented for 1, 2, or 3 or more offenses by offense type.

## 2.4 Frequency of Offenses by Type of Offense

As described above, the offenses analyzed for this report include: (1) criminal offenses against persons or property, in which an arrest of a juvenile was made; (2) status offenses in which a juvenile was written up for the offense; and (3) incidents related to family or domestic conflicts in which Grand Rapids police were called to intervene. Across these three categories, a total of 2,299 unique offenses were recorded for 2007 and included in the analysis for this report (see Table 2.1 on page 7).

Figure 2.3 (page 8) shows both the number of offenses and number of youth involved by type of offense and category. For the second year in a row, disorderly conduct, assaults, and retail fraud top the list as the

Table 2.2: Number of youth involved in single versus multiple types of included offenses in 2007.

Offense Types	N	Percent
<b>One offense type only</b>		
Crime Only	467	30.0
Status Offense Only	626	40.2
FDI Only	166	10.6
<b>Multiple offense types</b>		
Crime & Status Offense	188	12.1
FDI & Crime	29	1.9
FDI & Status Offense	48	3.1
FDI, Crime & Status Offense	35	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1559</b>	<b>100.0</b>

most common crimes committed by youth. In order of current ranking, the five most common youth crimes are: (1) disorderly conduct; (2) assault; (3) retail fraud; (4) drug-related crime; and (5) driving offenses. This ranking is consistent with the findings from the 2006 report for disorderly conduct, assault, and retail fraud. The number of driving offenses decreased over 37% between 2006 and 2007, accounting for the drop in ranking for this offense. Retail fraud also decreased considerably (32.1%) in 2007 compared with 2006. Assaults and disorderly conducts decreased more modestly, with declines of 12.1% and 10.3% respectively when compared with the 2006 baseline. While these trends suggest a hopeful direction, time has yet to tell whether they indicate a genuine trend.

In addition, curfew violations, family or domestic trouble, and running away from home continue to be significant sources of juvenile offenses, accounting for 61% of all offenses committed by youth in 2007. This proportion is similar to the findings from 2006, in which 58% of offenses fell into these categories. These continued patterns serve as a reminder of the importance of promoting healthy family relationships for our community's youth.

## 2.5 Timing of Youth Offenses

Data from the 2006 report indicated that the period after school was the peak time for juvenile criminal offenses to occur. In 2007, this pattern continues, with

a substantial spike occurring in the hours between 2 and 3:59 pm. In addition, on both school and non-school days, the frequency of offenses spiked in the mid-evening hours between 6 and 8:59 pm.

## 2.6 Geography of Youth Offenses

Figures 2.5 through 2.8 show the spatial distribution of juvenile offenses across the city. Figure 2.5 on page 11 maps all juvenile-perpetrated criminal offenses with an arrest, status offenses, and family domestic incidents reported by the Grand Rapids Police Department in 2007. These offense types are shown separately on the following pages, with Figure 2.6 on page 12 depicting only those offenses in which a juvenile was arrested for a crime, Figure 2.7 on page 13 depicting juvenile status offenses, and Figure 2.8 on page 14 indicating offenses relating to family or domestic trouble calls. These maps represent the locations of the offense only, not the homes of the youth who are involved.

When examining these maps, it is important to note that the concentration of juvenile offenses varies both across neighborhoods *and* within neighborhoods. There are many factors that influence this. Certain areas may pose higher-risk environments for youth. Other areas may simply be more likely to attract higher numbers of youth. A comparison of apparent "trouble spot" areas on a map with local understanding of how these geographic areas are used and experienced by youth can help to shed light on these issues.

Special consideration was given to preserve the privacy of individuals. The CRI data-use agreement with the Grand Rapids Police Department requires data to be aggregated to geographies larger than the address for public display. To meet this standard, a grid of equally-sized cells (2,500 square feet) was created and used to aggregate individual offenses. This technique serves two purposes: (1) it facilitates comparing geographies (areas) of different sizes and (2) it preserves the privacy of individuals. Each cell was then color coded with a continuum of shades representing the number of offenses in that cell, with lighter shades representing fewer offenses and darker shades representing more offenses.

Other physical features including public school buildings (elementary, middle, and high schools), location of after school programs, and parks are shown to help provide local context.

Juvenile Crime Offenses by Hour of Day:  
School vs. Non-School Days

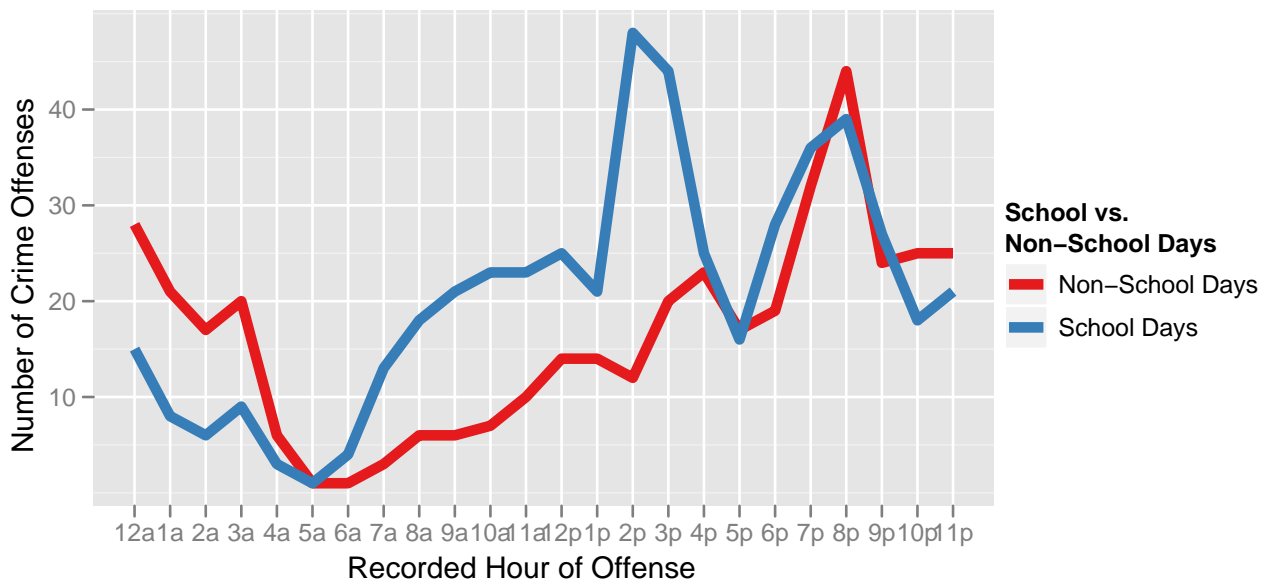


Figure 2.4: Count of total crime offenses by hour of day for both school days (bottom panel) and non-school days (top panel)

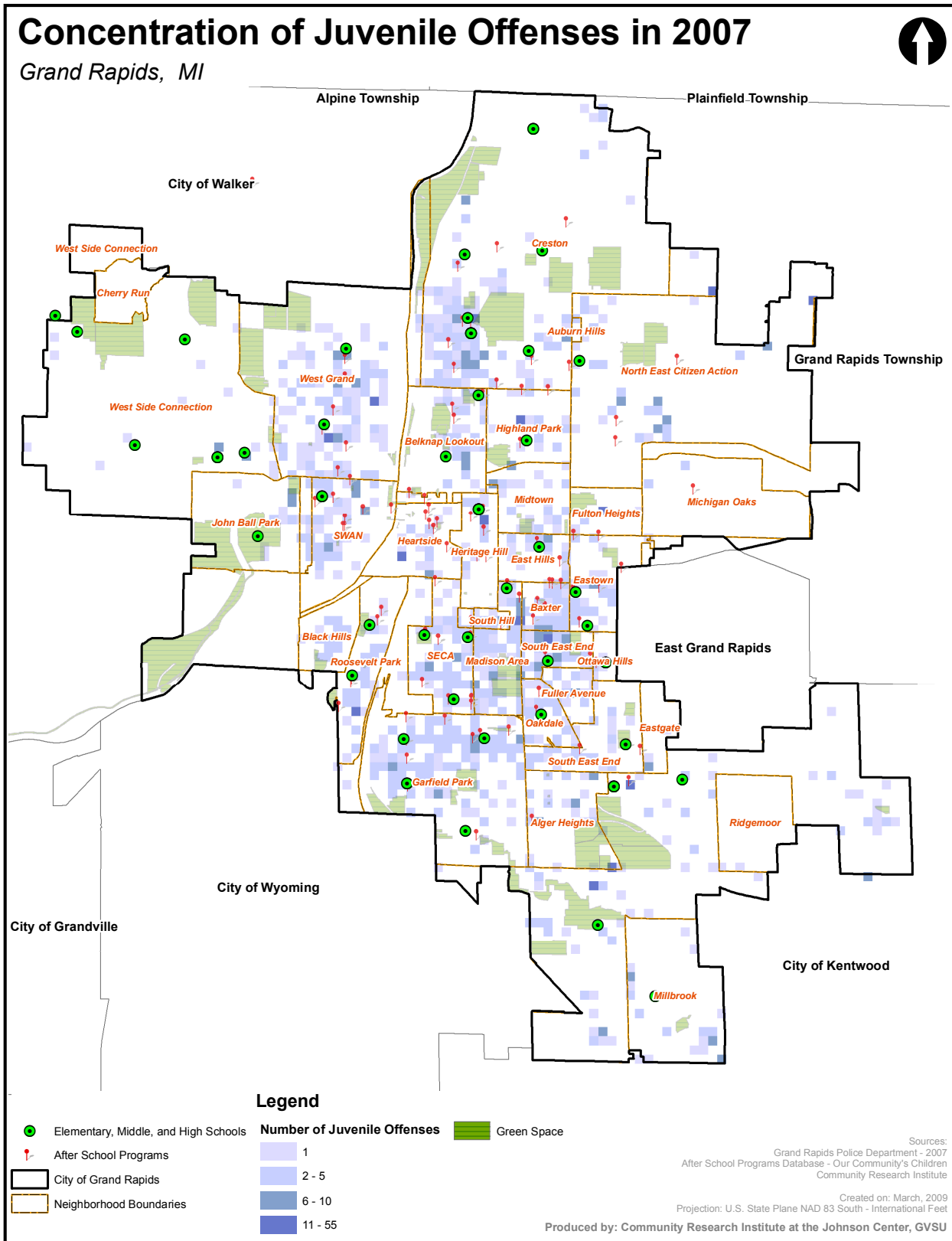


Figure 2.5: Grand Rapids Juvenile Offenses in 2007—All Offenses

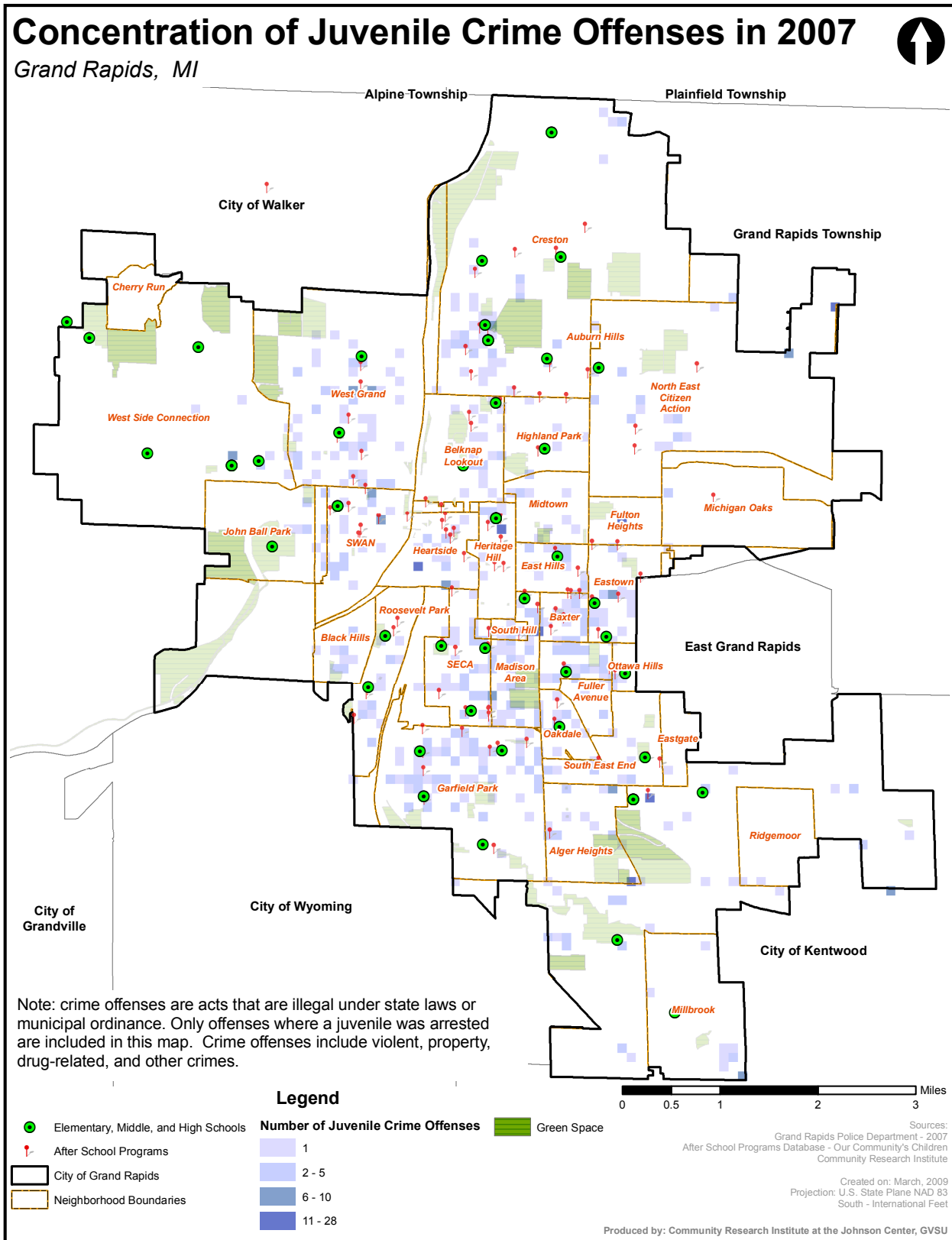


Figure 2.6: Grand Rapids Juvenile Offenses in 2007—Crime Offenses Only



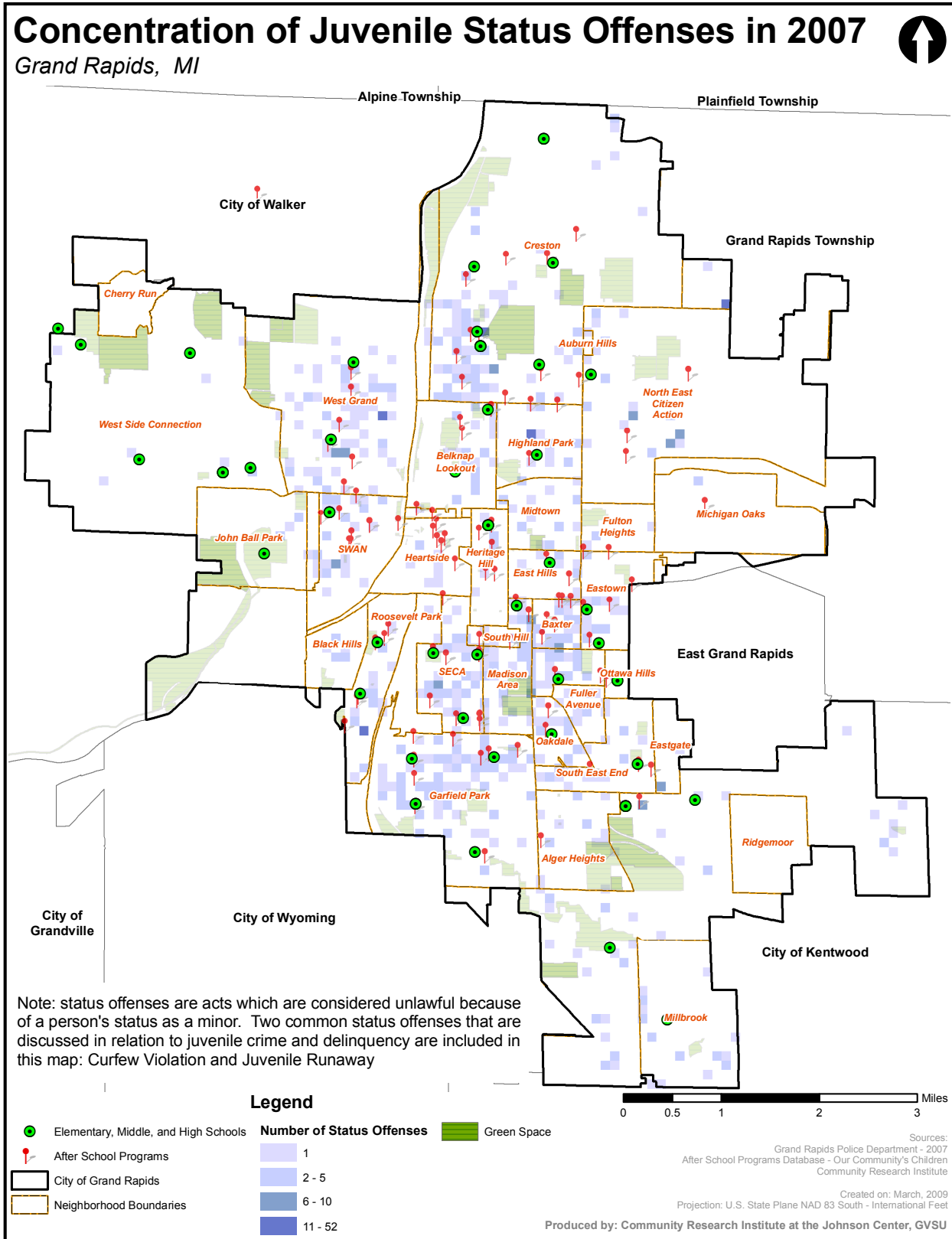


Figure 2.7: Grand Rapids Juvenile Offenses in 2007—Status Offenses Only

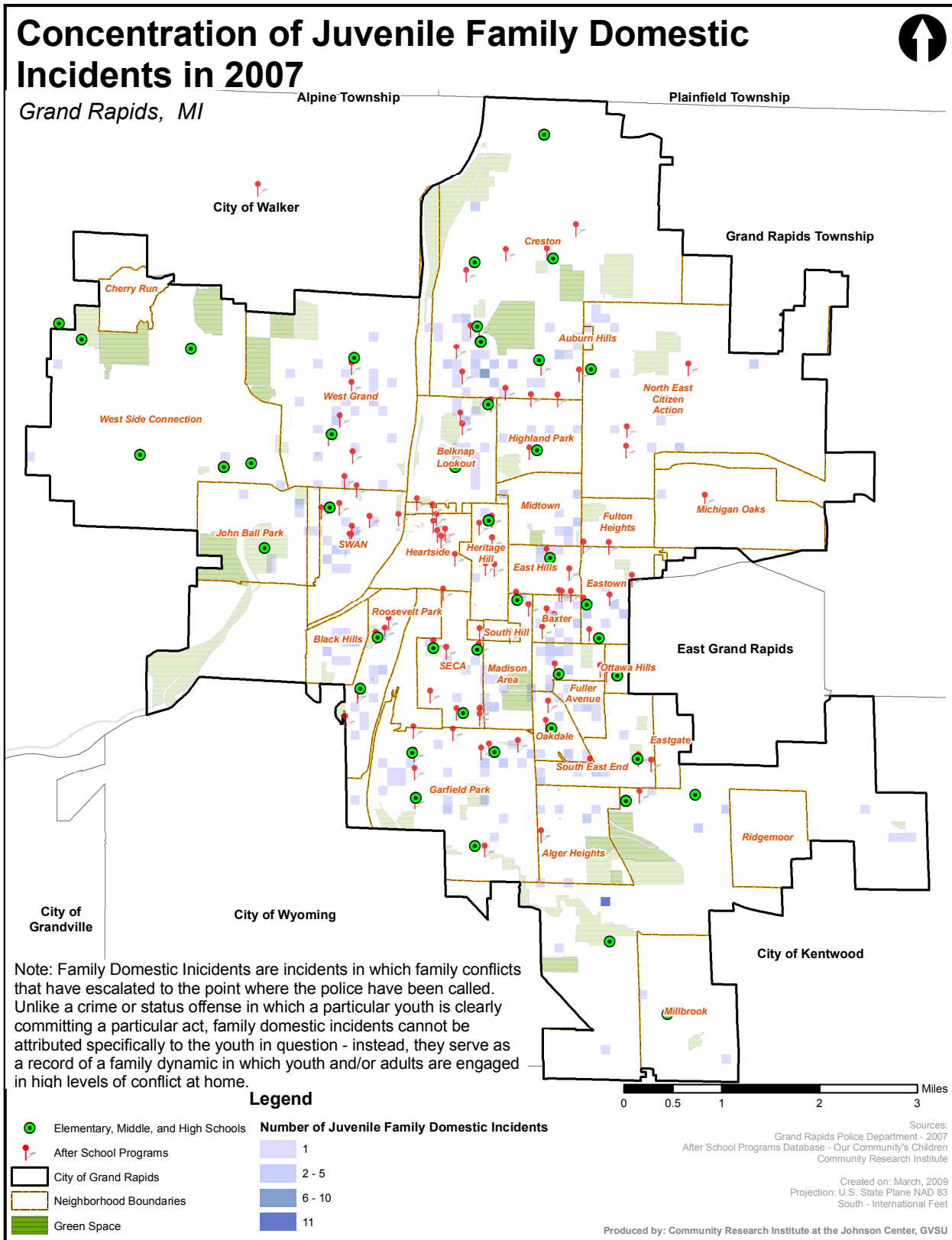


Figure 2.8: Grand Rapids Juvenile Offenses in 2007—Family Domestic Incidents Only

## 2.7 Neighborhood-Level Profiles

In a reprise of the analyses conducted for the 2006 report, the Community Research Institute has prepared individual profiles for each of the officially-recognized neighborhood areas within the City of Grand Rapids. These profiles are provided separately from this main report and can be accessed from the CRI website at [www.cridata.org](http://www.cridata.org).

## 2.8 Conclusion

While the findings from our analysis of 2007 juvenile offenses hint at some favorable shifts in the extent of youth involvement in crime, it would be yet unwise to suggest that these differences represent a definite trend. Genuine decline in juvenile delinquency is indeed one possibility. However, the differences observed in the current could be attributed to random variation, changes in the youth population within the City of Grand Rapids, changes in Grand Rapids Police Department staffing or patrol behavior, or some combination of all of these.

However, the consistency of this year's findings with

those from the prior year underscore the key policy implications suggested in that report. Specifically, the sharp uptick in delinquency between the ages of 13 and 14 emphasizes the need to ensure that preventive resources are in place to engage youth in these age groups in positive activities. The continued trend for youth crimes to occur in the after-school and early evening hours suggests further attention to youth programming at these times and to ensuring that those youth who are at risk are actively engaged in these programs.