

Accessibility of Afterschool Programs in New Orleans

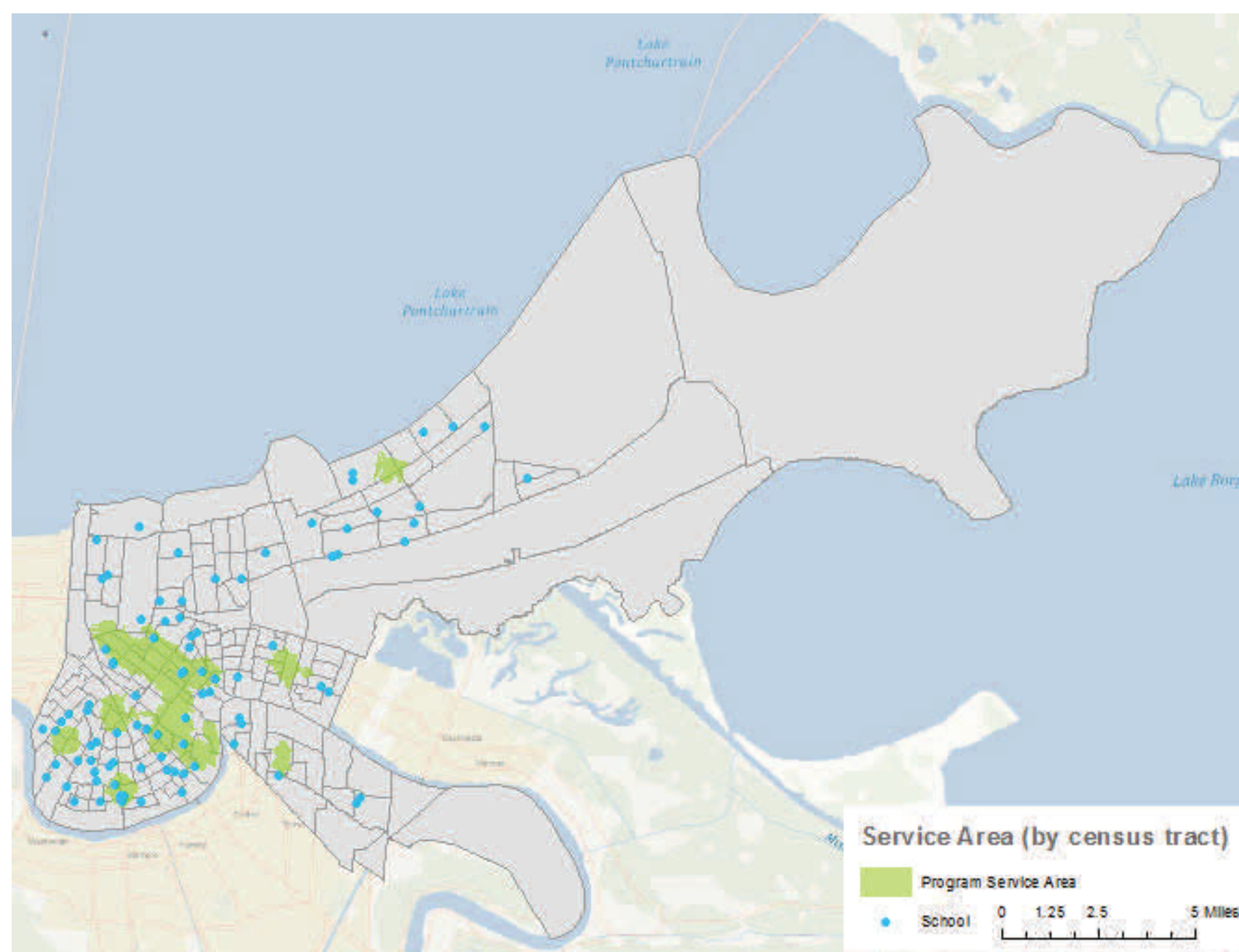
Project Description

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the whole city of New Orleans had to focus on rebuilding. Along with re-establishing homes and businesses, schools needed to be rebuilt. In this unique situation of literally starting from the ground up, groups had the opportunity to establish charter schools as an alternative to the public and private schools that existed before. The entire Orleans Parish district also became “open choice”, which allows parents to send their children to any school in the district, transportation included (US News). This has increased the competition for students and advertisements for educational options inundate families on a daily basis.

America’s Promise Alliance (APA) is working with the New Orleans Kids Partnership (NOKP) to try to strengthen and solidify the pipeline of resources children receive from “cradle-to-college”. One aspect APA and NOKP is interested in is how well all the schools match the demographics of the census tracts they are situated within: *Are the schools able to serve their neighborhood or are families forced to select a school outside their area?* Another area of interest is in off-site afterschool programs: *Are programs located evenly around New Orleans or are there clusters of programs? Are the programs located near enough to schools that students may walk if they have no other form of transportation to get there?*

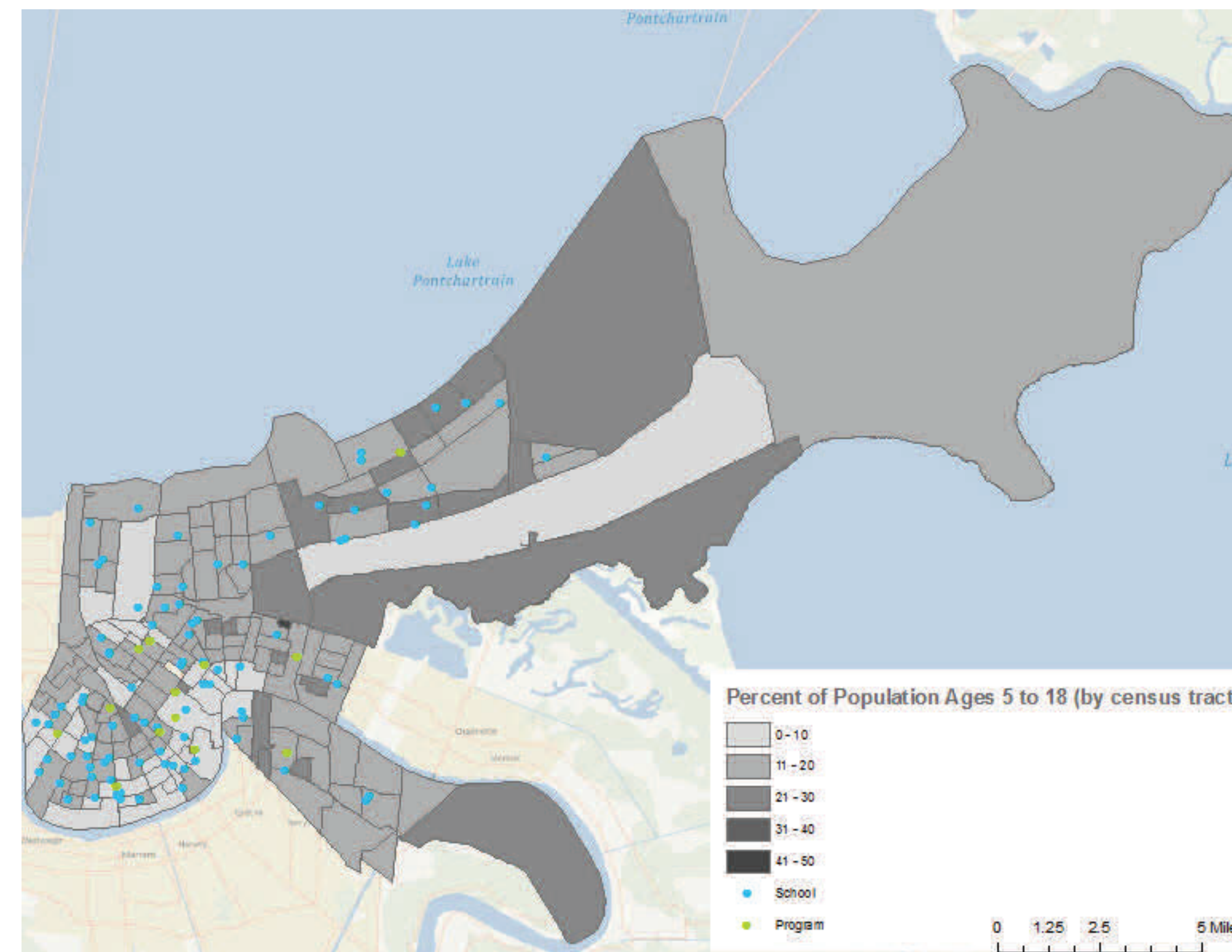
Service Area for Afterschool Programs

- *Location of Schools.* A list of schools and addresses was created from information on the website www.greatschools.org. The schools were then geocoded in ArcMap 10 and plotted on a map of Orleans Parish, LA.
- *Location of Afterschool Programs.* The same website and steps were taken to create a map of the location of afterschool programs within the same area. The points from these steps were plotted on the same map to see any trends that existed.
- *Create Program Service Area.* I used the Network Analysis tool to create a service area for each of the programs, based on the distance of 1000 feet. I chose this distance because it seems a reasonable distance to allow children of a young age to be able to walk unsupervised from one location to another. It is slightly less than 0.20 miles and the student would be visible at that distance.

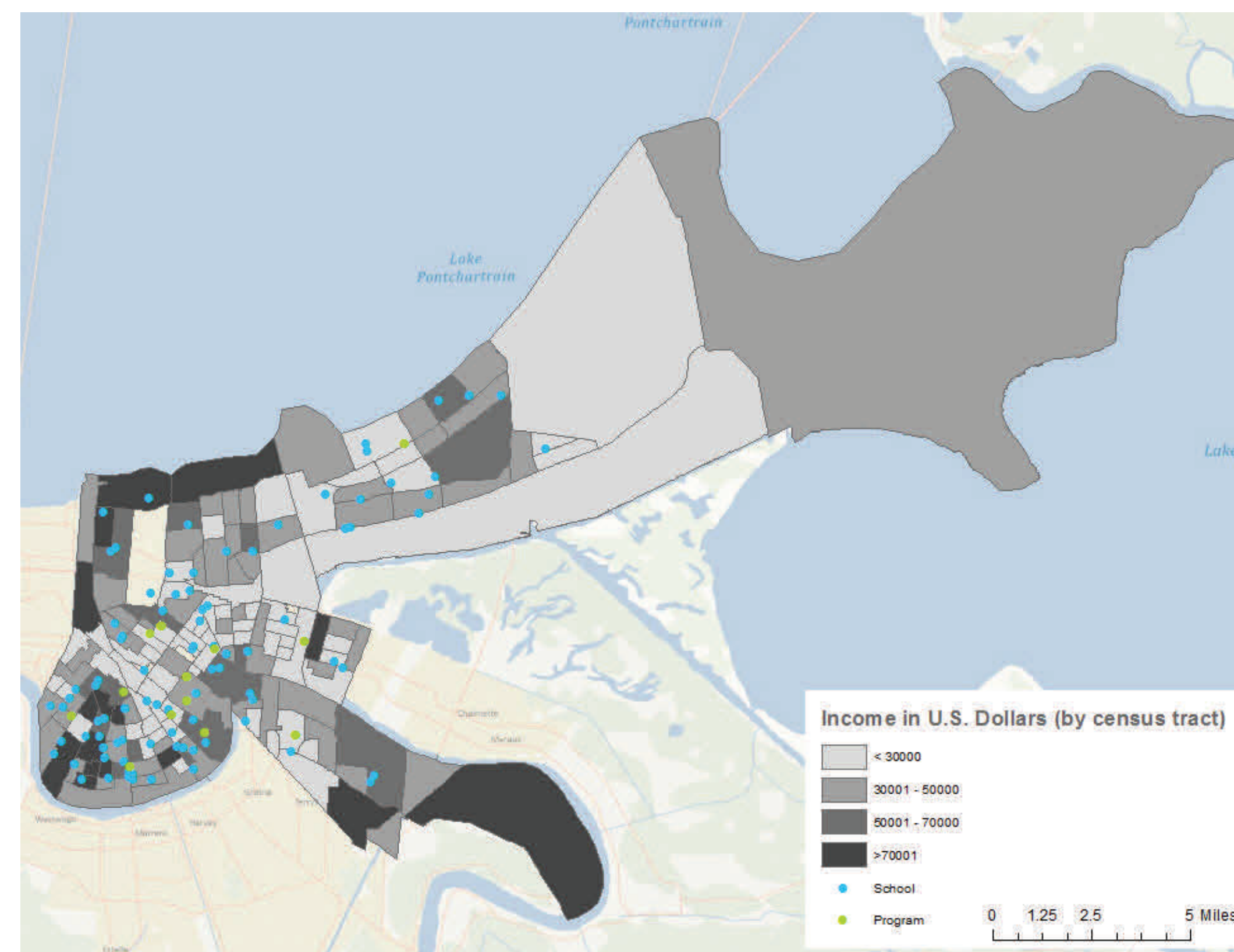


Census Tract Demographics

- *School-Aged Population.* To examine this demographic item, I retrieved information on the ages of the population from the 2010 Census. To determine the percentage of the population considered “school-aged”, I subtracted the percentage under 5 (*U5Per*) from percentage under 18 (*Under18Per*). This gave me the percentage of youth in each census tract between the ages of 5 and 18.
- This demographic is significant because it will show if schools are distributed evenly through census tracts and located where there are more children, or if there is a mismatch and more youth are coming from outside the census tract to attend school than live there.



- *Median Household Income.* I also retrieved information on *Median Family Income* from the 2010 Census American FactFinder.
- This is an important demographic to include since youth from families with low income are at greater risk for developmental delays and later dropping out of school. Participating in high-quality afterschool programs can help offset the effects of poverty, improving youth development and academic achievement (Posner & Vandell, 1999). Therefore, youth in low-income areas would benefit the most from afterschool programs.



Analysis

Program Service Area. Only 20 of the 90 schools are within 1000 feet of a program, indicating a youth would need to take public transportation or be driven by a parent. These options may not be viable for low-income youth and reduces youth access. One suggestion to program leaders is to offer transportation for students. New programs or ones looking to relocate should consider locations near clusters of schools to optimize potential participants.

Location and Population. The demographic maps show a mismatch between neighborhood demographics, needs and services. Schools and programs cluster mainly to the west and south yet the northern half of the parish has higher percentages of school-aged youth by census tract. This indicates that the youth in those areas have to commute to the other side of the parish to attend school. Conversely, the census tracts with low percentages of school-aged children are where the schools are clustered. This demonstrates an uneven distribution of schools and programs. Services should look to the northern part of the parish to develop programs because the population out there may not be being reached.

Location and Income. Examining median family income further illustrates this disparity. There is more money in the west, which is where schools and programs are located. The area to the east has lower income, no afterschool programs, and a higher percentage of school-aged youth. This is precisely the area where programs should want to be; participating in afterschool programs has demonstrated better academic and social outcomes for low-income youth compared to those who do not participate (Posner & Vandell, 1999).

Limitations

First, the school data represents schools containing all grades and programs for students of all grades. I initially wanted to specifically examine middle school-aged youth but when pulling information on the age ranges from the Census data, age ranges overlapped. Also, because of how the schools are structured, they all housed grades 6-8. All afterschool programs were mapped as a result, even though they likely do not serve youth of all ages. There may be programs targeted at specific age-ranges or demographics that do not fit all students included in the sample.

Second, when mapping the location of afterschool programs, I didn’t include programs that occur on-site at schools. Most schools have their own programs for students to attend. Only looking at off-site programs presents a smaller number of potential programs, skewing the information. One way to correct for this could be to find out which schools offer programming and include them in the list of afterschool programs.

Finally, my analysis was limited to only examining programs within walking distance because I was unable to find transit data. I searched the New Orleans Transit Authority (NORTA) website, a local non-profit clearinghouse and even general transit clearinghouses but could not find anything. For the sake of time, I decided to eliminate it from my analysis. However, because it is so important, I will continue searching out this information.