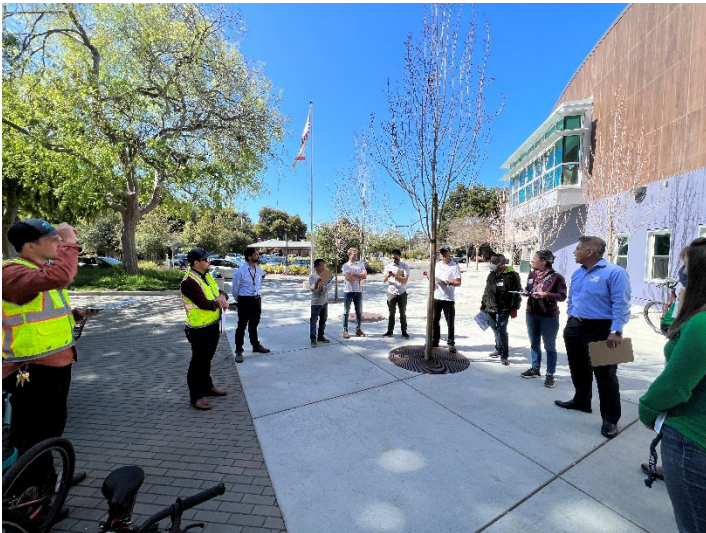


Menlo Park Safe Routes to School

WALK AUDIT

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM



LAUREL SCHOOL UPPER CAMPUS

275 Elliott Drive, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Menlo Park City School District

April 2022

LAUREL SCHOOL UPPER CAMPUS


The study team conducted a walk audit at Laurel School Upper Campus in Menlo Park, during the afternoon dismissal on March 17th, 2022. The audit was attended by representatives from the City of Menlo Park, Alta Planning + Design (Alta), and Laurel School Upper Campus (Laurel Upper) staff and parents. Participants included:

- Hugh Louch, Assistant Public Works Director – Transportation
- Nicholas Yee, Safe Routes to School Project Manager, City of Menlo Park
- Vincent Leveque, parent
- Phu Nguyen, Transportation Engineer, Public Works
- Patrick Palmer, Transportation Engineer, Public Works
- Ross Okamura, parent
- Ajit Jain, parent
- Wendy Hornstein, parent
- Meredith Bergin Bailey, parent
- Ashley Guilliot, Assistant Principal, Laurel School
- Ruben Trabanino, Director of Maintenance, Operations and Transportation, MPCSD
- Mauricio Hernández, Senior Planner, Alta
- Austin Dunn, Landscape Designer, Alta
- Andre-Anne Cadieux, Planner, Menlo Park Safe Routes to School Coordinator, Alta

This memo summarizes the existing conditions and feedback received from stakeholders during the observation period and discussion. The document provides educational and encouragement programmatic recommendations that the school can pursue with the Menlo Park SRTS Program. An Improvement Plan Map is also included and contains infrastructure recommendations that the City of Menlo Park and the Menlo Park City School District can implement.

School Information

Location & Enrollment

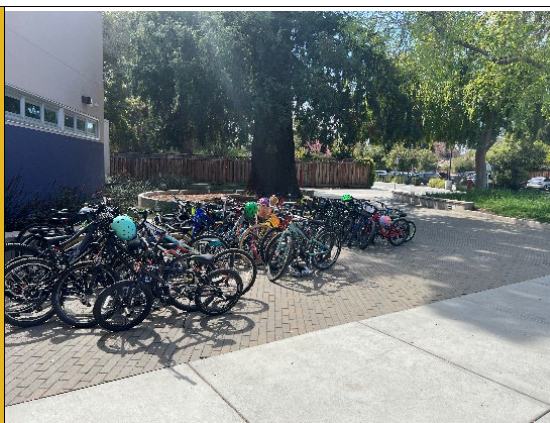

	Address:	275 Elliott Drive
	Morning Bell(s):	8:30 am
	Afternoon Bell(s):	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 3:05 pm Friday: 2:00 pm
	Grade Levels:	Grades 3 to 5
	Enrollment:	342
	School Type (neighborhood/magnet/charter):	Neighborhood


Student Travel Data

Students' Proximity to School (school estimate)	According to the school administration, 50-74% of students live within one mile or less of school
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Student Travel Mode Info:	Recent SRTS Hand Tally Data: Fall 2021 Data Walking: 3% Biking: 18% School bus: 19% Transit: 0% Carpool: 14% Family Vehicle: 45%
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Bicycle, Buses, and Drop-off/Pick-up

<p>Does the school have bike racks? What is the capacity? Is it secure bike parking?</p> <p>On a typical day, what percentage of racks are used?</p>		<p>The school has racks at the school front entrance. Additional secure parking is not provided.</p> <p>Approximately 70 bikes were parked the day of the walk audit.</p> <p>Bike rack capacity: 110</p> <p>Bike Rack Utilization: 63%</p>
<p>How do school buses interact with the school?</p>		<p>The school bus loading zone is located at the front entrance on Elliott Dr.</p>

<p>Does the school have special pick-up/drop-off policies/procedures?</p>		<p>The school has a designated student loading zone. A staff person is present in front of the school during the drop off period to direct students and parents.</p>
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Street Profiles

Street Name	Width (ft.)	Lanes	Posted Speed Limit (MPH)	Traffic Volumes
Elliott Drive*	29	2	15	N/A
O'Connor Street*	33	2	15	N/A
Oak Court*	29	2	25	N/A
Menalto Avenue	31	2	25	N/A

*Road segment identified in 2021 to be part of a school zone speed limit reduction project to 15 mph.

Pedestrian- and Bicycle-Involved Collision Summary (2016-2020)

The collision summary table shows all bicycle involved collisions within one-half mile (1/2) of the school for the 5-year period between 2016-2020.¹ There was no pedestrian involved collisions for that period of time. These collisions may or may not be school-related travel.

Radius from School	Total Collisions	Fatal Collisions	Severe Injury Collisions	Visible Injury Collisions	Complaint of Pain Collisions	Bicycle Collisions
< ¼ mi	1	0	0	0	0	1
¼– ½ mi	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	2	0	0	0	0	2

¹ UC Berkeley – Transportation Injury Mapping System, Safe Transportation Research and Education Center, University of California, Berkeley, 2021. Data downloaded in December 2021. berkeley.edu/

Community Health and Demographics (Data from the census tract of school site)²

Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Priced Meals ('20-'21 school year)	MTC Equity Priority Communities (2018) ³	Healthy Places Index Score (2021) ⁴	CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Percentile (2021) ⁵
10.4% (for both upper and lower campuses)	Yes, for the majority of the school attendance area	38.9%	68

² California Department of Education, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Public Health Alliance of Southern California, and California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/>

³ MTC Equity Priority Communities, 2018 (ACS 2012 - 2016), Updated June 3, 2021.

opendata.mtc.ca.gov/maps/MTC::mtc-equity-priority-communities-in-2018-ac-2012-2016/explore

⁴ Public Health Alliance of Southern California. Healthy Places Index Score, 2021. map.healthyplacesindex.org/

⁵ CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Percentile, 2021. experience.arcgis.com/experience/4af93cf9888a424481d2868391af2d82

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Overview

Laurel Elementary School has two campuses. Laurel School Lower Campus (Laurel Lower) and Laurel School Upper Campus (Laurel Upper). Laurel Upper is located along Elliott Drive in the City of Menlo Park's District 5, in The Willows neighborhood. In the 2021-2022 school calendar, the school served 360 students, grades 3 to 5, who came from the city of Menlo Park. Laurel Lower served 350 student, grades K to 2 and is located about 1.5 miles from Laurel Upper, on Edge Road within the limits of the Town of Atherton. The two campuses are connected with Coleman Avenue. The segment of Coleman Avenue within the limits of the City of Menlo Park (between Willow Road and Berkeley Avenue) is classified as a bicycle boulevard.⁶ Many families have to cross Willow Road to go to and come from school (Half of the school attendance area is west of Willow Road). Willow Road is classified as a "[Mixed Use] - Avenue"⁷ and connects the neighborhood with the Highway 101.

Laurel Upper has two bicycle and pedestrian entrances, one located on Oak Court and the other at the back of the school, on Falk Court. All vehicular pick-up and drop-off activity occurs along Elliott Drive.

The school buses enter the campus through a gate on Oak Court. Two crossing guards help students and families cross at the intersections of Oak Court/ Menalto Avenue and Menalto Avenue/O'Connor Street.

Observations

The following conditions and behaviors were observed or reported by participants during the school safety assessment (SSA).

1. Elliott Drive/School Front Entrance

- ◆ Elliott Drive is a two-lane road and serves as a local street linking the school to O'Connor Street, another local road. It is the only vehicle access point to the school's pick-up/drop-off loop.
- ◆ Elliott Drive has a stop sign at the intersection with O'Connor Street.
- ◆ Parking is restricted on school days between 2:50 to 3:35 pm. Additional extended restrictions from 1:45 to 2:30 pm on Thursday afternoons (early dismissal day) also exist.
- ◆ There are two transverse crosswalks to reach the parking lot.
- ◆ The car queue was observed to begin forming at 1:44 pm. The peak of the pick-up period lasted 20 minutes.
- ◆ Car back-up was observed in the parking lot, with children moving between the cars in line. The group counted 45 cars.

6-7 City of Menlo Park. 2016. "General Plan. Circulation Element", Adopted November 29, 2016. beta.menlopark.org/files/sharedassets/public/community-development/documents/figure2_streetclassifications_rev.pdf

- ◆ The parking restrictions were not followed and parked cars were observed on Elliott Drive.
- ◆ Car queue filled up the entire parking lot, up to Elliott Drive and drivers were blocked into the parking lot lanes.
- ◆ The outside lane of the two-lane loading loop was filled and drivers were observed using the inside lane to exit.
- ◆ Drivers were idling while waiting to pick up their students.
- ◆ School staff were present in front of the entrance to direct students and parent drivers during the pick-up.
- ◆ Students were observed being picked-up along the queuing line, despite school staff instructions to pick-up in front of the school entrance.
- ◆ The school bus loading zone is located along Elliott Drive, near the school front entrance. Two full size buses arrived 20 minutes after dismissal, at 2:21 pm and 2:26 pm. According to school officials, one bus drives students living within the school attendance boundary and the other drives students living within the Ravenswood City School District attendance boundary (students from the [Tinsley Program](#)).
- ◆ Existing vegetation blocks parts of the existing sidewalk along Elliott Drive, near the intersection with O'Connor Street.



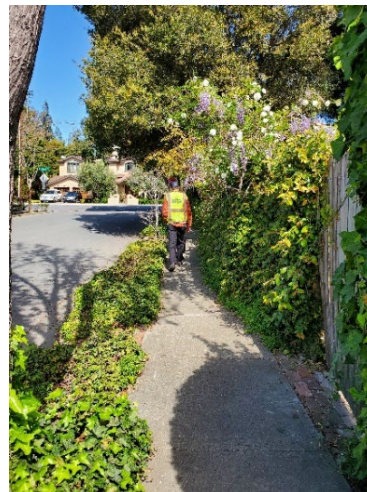
*Left: Cars exiting the school on Elliott Drive. Cars are blocking the crosswalk.
Right: Car line forming the drop-off/pick-up loop.*

2. O'Connor Street

- ◆ According to the “Street classifications” included in the City of Menlo Park General Plan, O'Connor Street is a two-lane street classified as a bicycle boulevard. There is a Class III Bike Route on O'Connor Street ⁸.
- ◆ There are two high-visibility crosswalks at the intersection of O'Connor Street and Elliott Drive.
- ◆ There is a crossing guard at the intersection of Elliott Drive and O'Connor Street.
- ◆ There is a sidewalk on the north side of O'Connor Street. There are sidewalk gaps on the western sections of O'Connor Street abutting Elliot Drive.



Left: School bus loading zone at the school front entrance.



Right: Existing vegetation blocking the sidewalk on Elliott Drive, near O'Connor Street.

3. Intersection of O'Connor Street/Menalto Avenue/Walnut Street

- ◆ The group observed that the speed humps at the intersection of Walnut Street and O'Connor Street seemed to slow down the traffic speed efficiently.
- ◆ There is a crossing guard at the intersection of O'Connor Street/Menalto Avenue/Walnut Street.
- ◆ There are transverse crosswalks at the intersection.
- ◆ Drivers were observed stopping in the crosswalk at the intersection with Elliott Drive.

⁸ City of Menlo Park. 2016. “General Plan. Circulation Element”, Adopted November 29, 2016. beta.menlopark.org/files/sharedassets/public/community-development/documents/figure2_streetclassifications_rev.pdf



Left: Crossing guard helping students to cross at the intersection of O'Connor and Menalto Ave.

- ◆ Existing vegetation blocks the stop sign at the intersection of Elliott Drive and O'Connor Street.
- ◆ Drivers were observed speeding on O'Connor Street, at the intersection of Menalto Avenue/Walnut Avenue.
- ◆ Drivers were observed not stopping at the stop signs.
- ◆ Drivers were observed doing U-turns to park.
- ◆ Some drivers were observed stopping along the route to pick-up students off the school campus.

4. Oak Court

- ◆ Oak Court is a cul-de-sac and a private road. The street is accessible to vehicles by Menalto Avenue and Woodland Avenue.
- ◆ There is no sidewalk and no street lighting on the street.
- ◆ The two school buses enter the campus through the school gate on Oak Court.
- ◆ Students that walked or biked to school were observed exiting the campus through the Oak Court entrance.
- ◆ Peak foot and bicycle traffic was observed from 2:00 to 2:18 pm.
- ◆ The majority of the children were walking their bike while on the sidewalk.
- ◆ There is signage on the street to prevent parents to drop-off/pick-up their students on Oak Court.
- ◆ There are parking restrictions in the morning (8:10 to 8:40 am) and afternoon (2:50 to 3:35 pm and 1:45 to 2:30 pm on Thursday, early dismissal day) on school days on the north side of the street.
- ◆ There is school staff present along the street to supervise the drop-off and pick-up.
- ◆ Parents and caregivers that picked up their children on Oak Court were generally walking or biking.
- ◆ The Oak Court pedestrian gate is closed during the weekend.
- ◆ There is currently a construction site at the end of the street.



Left: Dead-end on Oak Court and "No School Drop-off" signage.



Right: Parents waiting for their students at the pedestrian/bicyclist gate on Oak Court. Students exiting the school at the peak period.

5. Intersection of Menalto Avenue / Oak Court

- ◆ Menalto Avenue is a two-lane neighborhood connector. There are businesses located on Menalto Avenue, between Gilbert Avenue and Oak Court (La Hacienda Super Mercado, Café Zoe, West Bay Cleaners, Dancer Dejour).
- ◆ Oak Court has a stop sign at the intersection with Menalto Avenue.
- ◆ Parents were observed parking in La Hacienda parking lot to wait for their children.
- ◆ There is a crossing guard at the intersection of Menalto Avenue and Oak Court.
- ◆ Perceived speeding was observed along Menalto Avenue.
- ◆ Some parents were observed parking in the Café Zoe or La Hacienda parking lot on Menalto Avenue and waited for their children on Oak Court.



Left and right: Crossing guard helping students and families crossing Menalto Avenue.

6. Falk Court Gate

- ◆ Falk Court is a cul-de-sac that connects to the baseball field at the back of the school.

- ◆ There is a pedestrian/bicyclist school entrance that is opened before and after school. The gate is closed during the weekend.



Left: Pedestrian and bicycle gate on Falk Court.

7. Willow Oaks Park Area

- ◆ According to the “Street classifications” included in the City of Menlo Park General Plan, Elm Street is classified as a bike boulevard between Menalto Avenue and Pope Street⁹.
- ◆ Pope Street is a local road¹⁰.
- ◆ Elm Street leads to the Silicon Valley International School Willows Campus (private school, grades pre-K to 12).
- ◆ Elm Street ends at the Willow Oaks Park and there is a pedestrian path that crosses the park to connect to Coleman Avenue, east of Willow Road.
- ◆ There are transverse crosswalks at the intersection of Elm Street and Pope Street.
- ◆ The intersection of Pope Street and Elm Street is 77 feet to cross Pope Street.
- ◆ Elm Street connects Willow Oaks Park to Laurel Upper. The students walk or roll along Elm Street to Menalto Avenue and O’Connor Street or Oak Court to get to school.

9 - 10 City of Menlo Park. 2016. “General Plan. Circulation Element”, Adopted November 29, 2016. beta.menlopark.org/files/sharedassets/public/community-development/documents/figure2_streetclassifications_rev.pdf

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

During and after the walk audit, parents and staff from Laurel Upper shared comments and concerns about their experiences and observations:

- ◆ There is perceived speeding along Gilbert Avenue.
- ◆ Some parents park their car on Gilbert Avenue and walk to drop-off/pick-up their children.
- ◆ The day of the observations was a light afternoon because many students stayed at school for a play rehearsal. Parents and school staff estimated that approximately 30 additional cars would have been observed on a regular pick-up period.
- ◆ Crossing guards were very friendly and know the students which makes it easier to anticipate and protect their route.
- ◆ Teachers complain about not being able to exit the school parking lot because of the pick-up.
- ◆ The parking lot was not full the day of the observations.
- ◆ Willow Road is hard to cross and many families live the other side of Willow Road.
- ◆ Some parents drive even for very short distances.
- ◆ O'Keefe Street and Walnut Street is a challenging intersection.
- ◆ Mornings are easier at the school. There is no drop-off line and arrivals are staggered.
- ◆ Kipp Valiant Community Prep and Silicon Valley International School impact the traffic patterns near Laurel Upper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Engineering Recommendations

Recommendations to improve infrastructure and/or operations surrounding Laurel School Upper Campus are included in the conceptual improvement plan found below.

1. Elliott Drive/School Front Entrance
 - ◆ Install clear signage and appropriate curb markings, pursuant to CA MUTCD and local ordinances, to indicate the parking restrictions and school loading zone on both sides of Elliott Drive.
 - ◆ Consider moving the teacher parking spaces from the school parking lot to Elliott Drive or Oak Court to reduce the conflict with parents during the pick-up period.
 - ◆ Trim the excess vegetation that is blocking the sidewalk along Elliot Drive
2. O'Connor Street
 - ◆ Consider installing/completing the sidewalk on one side of the street on O'Connor Street.
3. Intersection of O'Connor Street/Menalto Avenue/Walnut Street
 - ◆ Consider installing traffic calming measures such as chicanes on O'Connor Street, between Menalto Avenue and Euclid Avenue.
 - ◆ Upgrade the crosswalks at the intersection to high-visibility.
4. Intersection of Menalto Avenue / Oak Court
 - ◆ In collaboration with La Hacienda, consider adding vertical barrier (ex. planters, flexible delineators) to protect pedestrians from the vehicles entering and exiting the designated parking area.
 - ◆ Consider installing a crosswalk for families crossing Menalto Avenue on the east side of the parking lot to improve the connection to the sidewalk.
5. Oak Court
 - ◆ Work with private property owners to explore pedestrian enhancements on private Oak Court, e.g., repaving the shoulder and creating a designated pedestrian path, installing pedestrian-scale street lighting.
6. Falk Court Gate
 - ◆ Work with school district to maintain the existing gate open every day for the morning and afternoon drop/off and pick up as well as before/after school activities. Consider opening the gate for special events such as school plays, sport games, etc.
7. Willow Oaks Park Area
 - ◆ Consider the implementation of curb extensions to provide reduce pedestrian crossing distances and curb motorist speeds.

- ◆ Upgrade the crosswalks at the intersection of Pope Street and Elm Street to high-visibility.
- ◆ Consider installing traffic calming measures on Elm Street to create a low speed, bicycle boulevard connection from the path through Willow Oaks Park (in development) to the school frontage.
- ◆ Extend the current pavement project from the path through Willow Oaks Park to the intersection of Pope Street and Elm Street.
- ◆ Upgrade the current 2-way stop control to all-way stop to improve school travel safety along Elm Street.
- ◆ Conduct a school safety assessment/walk audit at KIPP Valiant Community Prep School and at Silicon Valley International School (*recommendation not on the improvement plan*).

8. Gilbert Avenue

- ◆ Explore traffic calming measures or other options to improve safety for children walking and biking along Gilbert Avenue.

9. Laurel School Lower Campus (*recommendation not on the improvement plan*)

- ◆ Conduct a **school safety assessment/walk audit** at the Lower Campus: Laurel School Lower Campus is located on Edge Road, at 1.6 miles of Laurel Upper. The two campuses have the same school attendance boundaries and many parents mentioned issues with the Lower Campus during the walk audit. The two school campuses should be treated as one.

Policy & Program Recommendations

In addition to engineering improvements, the [Menlo Park Safe Routes to Schools Program](#) has many encouragement and educational activities that can benefit students and the campus community at Laurel School Upper Campus.

The Menlo Park Safe Routes to School Coordinator can provide technical assistance to schedule, organize, and promote education and encouragement activities and events. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Menlo Park SRTS Coordinator

(saferoutestoschool@menlopark.org) if you have any questions or concerns, or if you wish to move forward with additional programming activities.

The following improvements are recommendations for policy and program implementation at Laurel School Upper Campus to increase safety and active commutes to school.

- ◆ **Promote the Suggested Routes to School Map:** The SRTS Program created a [suggested routes to school map for Laurel School Upper Campus](#). An [online interactive map](#) is also available. The map illustrates preferred routes to school for walking and biking. It also provides safety tips to encourage better travel behavior. This map can also be used as a part of Walking School Buses (WSBs), Bicycle Trains (BTs), Park and Walk programs or other Walk and Roll to School activities.
- ◆ **Encourage Parents to Park and Walk from Designated Locations:** Potential Park and walk locations have been identified on the Improvement Plan Map.

- Work with La Hacienda, on Menalto Avenue, to create an official Park & Walk designated location in the store parking lot.
- Encourage families to park along Gilbert Avenue, between Pope Street and Menalto Avenue and walk to Upper Laurel Campus.
- ◆ **Driver/Student Education:** The school should educate parents/caregivers on safe behaviors and habits during drop-off/pick-up periods, e.g., no idling, respect the parking restrictions near the school, watch for bicyclists when open the doors, be mindful of neighbors, etc.
- ◆ **Facilitate Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains:** Walking School Buses (WSBs) and Bicycle Trains (BTs) are groups of students, led by parent/adult chaperone(s), that meet at designated locations and times to gather and walk and/or bike to school together. WSBs and BTs can encourage families that live the other side of Willow Road to walk or bike to school.
 - WSBs and BTs can be regular events, occurring daily, weekly, or monthly or occur in coordination with other events like International Walk and Roll to School Day or the Golden Sneaker Contest. The SRTS Coordinator can assist schools with the planning, coordination, and execution of the WSBs and BTs. Walking and biking in groups with parental supervision can not only increase the visibility of these road users, but can reduce barriers to walking or biking for some families while making it fun and exciting for the students.
- ◆ **Drop-off and Pick-Up Procedures**
 - Train a staff person to be in charge of metering the cars to ensure the line of pick-up vehicles is not blocking the whole parking lot.
 - Add signage at the drop-off/pick-up zone to encourage parents to pick-up or drop-off their children in front of the line.
 - Encourage the teachers to park in the streets near the school.
- ◆ **Enforcement:** Work with the Menlo Park Police Department to enforce the parking restrictions near the school.