

CITY OF YUBA CITY
STAFF REPORT

Date: September 15, 2020
To: Honorable Mayor & Members of the City Council
From: Administration
Presentation by: Diana Langley, Interim City Manager

Summary

Subject: 2019-2020 Grand Jury Report Response
Recommendation: Approve the 2019-2020 Grand Jury Response
Fiscal Impact: None

Purpose:

To respond to the 2019-2020 Grand Jury Report.

Background:

On June 23rd the City received the 2019-2020 Grand Jury Report regarding traffic safety at schools within Yuba City Unified School District and requested the City respond to their findings and recommendations within 90 days of receiving the letter.

Fiscal Impact:

None.

Alternatives:

Approve the Grand Jury Response with edits

Recommendation:

Approve the 2019-2020 Grand Jury Response.

Attachments:

1. Letter - Yuba City Grand Jury Response
2. 2019-2020 Grand Jury Report – Traffic Safety at Our Schools

Submitted by:

/s/ Diana Langley

Diana Langley
Interim City Manager

Reviewed by:

Finance

[SM](#)

City Attorney

[SLC by email](#)

ATTACHMENT 1



September 15, 2020

Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
County of Sutter
1175 Civic Center Blvd
Yuba City CA 95993

Re: 2019-2020 Sutter County Grand Jury Report

To the Honorable Presiding Judge:

This letter is the official consolidated response of the City of Yuba City regarding the Grand Jury Report on the report entitled Traffic Safety at Our Schools.

Grand Jury Findings

F1. One designated pickup/drop off zone is insufficient for Riverbend's 1,000+ student population during peak volume times.

Response: *For a larger school, one designated pickup/drop off zone can be problematic. Other schools with similar situations try to address this by staggering start and end of school times for the various grades.*

F3. No mid-block crosswalk on Stewart Road in front of Riverbend, leads to pedestrian jaywalking.

Response: *The City acknowledges the finding but has concerns with an uncontrolled mid-block crosswalk. For further discussion, please see the response to recommendation R4.*

F4. Drivers not following rules of the road create unsafe conditions.

Response: *The City agrees with the finding.*

F5. Driver compliance increased when a peace officer was present.

Response: *The City agrees with the finding.*

F9. There was a significant lack of street signage and curb markings adjacent to schools.

Response: *The City respectfully disagrees with the finding to the extent that the finding implies that minimum signage requirements have not been met (see Response to R8), and also agrees that more signage may be warranted if appropriate depending upon the location. In this*

regard, the City has already prepared a Safe Routes to School Plan, dated February 2020, which evaluated each school site within the Yuba City Unified School District and made recommendations related to street signage and curb markings. As budget allows, staff will be implementing the recommendations.

Recommendations

- R4.** A survey be conducted to add a mid-block crosswalk on Stewart Road in front of Riverbend by December 2021

Response: *The City will coordinate with Yuba City Unified School District to evaluate the installation of a mid-block crosswalk by December 2021. There are many factors to consider including:*

- *Location of the mid-block crosswalk. Just because a mid-block crosswalk is provided does not mean that pedestrians will use it. Location will be key to encourage pedestrians to utilize the crosswalk.*
- *How to direct pedestrians on the south side of Stewart Road to the mid-block crosswalk. There are no sidewalks on the south side of Stewart Road.*
- *Control of the crosswalk via a crossing guard, flashing beacon, or even pedestrian traffic signal.*
- *Lighting as there may be events that occur at night at the school in which pedestrians will be using the mid-block crosswalk at night.*
- *Cost and funding availability.*

- R5.** Yuba City Police Department to increase periodic presence of a School Resource or Peace Officer as resources permit to deter unsafe behavior by drivers by start of 2020/2021 school year.

Response: *The Yuba City Police Department will increase periodic presence of a School Resource or Peace Officer as resources permit once school is back in session with in-classroom learning.*

- R8.** City of Yuba City to maintain curb painting and have clearly distinguished “No Parking” areas on the public streets adjacent to the schools by start of the 2020/2021 school year.

Response: *It is unclear from the report as to if this comment is related to a specific school or rather a general comment. The report notes that the Grand Jury observed parents using no parking zones for pickup and drop off of Riverbend students, in particular, on Garden Highway. There are signs posted on Garden Highway at regular intervals that state, “No Parking Any Time”. City staff will evaluate this corridor once school is back in session with in-classroom learning to determine if additional signage, curb painting, and/or striping is required. Staff will also coordinate with Yuba City Unified School District by December 2021 to identify other areas that require curb painting and clearly distinguished “No Parking” areas.*

The City Council will also direct that a copy of this response be placed on file with the City Clerk.

Respectfully submitted,

Shon Harris
Mayor

Marc Boomgaarden
Vice-Mayor

Manny Cardoza
Councilmember

Grace Espindola
Councilmember

Dave Shaw
Councilmember

Diana Langley
Interim City Manager

ATTACHMENT 2

Yuba City Unified School District TRAFFIC SAFETY AT OUR SCHOOLS

SUMMARY

Pursuant to California Penal Code 925, the Sutter County Grand Jury (SCGJ) has the authority to investigate county, city, and local government entities. A grand juror brought up potential traffic and safety issues at Riverbend Elementary School (Riverbend) during peak volume pick up and drop off times. After observing pick up and drop off time periods at all eleven Yuba City Unified School District (YCUSD) elementary schools, the SCGJ looked more closely at two schools: Riverbend in Yuba City and Park Avenue Elementary (Park Avenue) due to significant problems observed. There were three areas of potential concern: established pick up/drop off procedures; student and driver behavior; and site conditions. The SCGJ interviewed school and district staff, parents, and the Yuba City police officer assigned as a school resources officer. The SCGJ reviewed relevant documents from the schools, district, and City of Yuba City.

BACKGROUND

The safety of all of our children is of vital concern at our local schools. Over time, children have been injured while going to or from their schools. YCUSD has seventeen schools in rural and urban areas with a combined enrollment of nearly 13,000 students ranging from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. District boundaries cover over 200 square miles. The oldest schools have buildings more than 70 years old, with “new” schools that are less than twenty years old.

Riverbend (Appendix 1), located at 302 Stewart Road, Yuba City, is a kindergarten through 8th grade school. It was opened in 2007. Student enrollment was approximately 1,171 during school year 2019-2020. Park Avenue (Appendix 2), 100 Morton Street, is a kindergarten through 5th grade elementary school. It is an older school dating back to at least 1949. It is located in the southeastern sector of Yuba City in a well-established neighborhood. As of 2019-2020 school year, it had a student enrollment of approximately 550 students.

METHODOLOGY

Tours & Visits:

- Yuba City Unified School District (YCUSD) Elementary Schools

Interviews:

- School Personnel
- Parents
- Yuba City Police Officer assigned as a school resource officer
- YCUSD Personnel

Research:

- Facilities Master Plan 2014 through 2024
- Yuba City Safe Routes to School Plan
- Agreement for Use of Motor-Vehicle Registration Surcharge Fees FRAQMD Agreement No. VF18-05 between City of Yuba City and Feather River Air Quality Management District FEB 25 2019
- Project Plans for School Crossing Improvements Projects for the City of Yuba City 3/21/19
- Letters to Parents from Riverbend and Park Avenue schools regarding pick up and drop off procedures.
- School diagrams and photographs.
- Yuba City Unified School District School Accountability Report Cards (SARC)

Park Avenue <https://www.sarconline.org/SarcPdfs/11/51714646053425.pdf>

Riverbend <https://www.sarconline.org/SarcPdfs/11/51714640113134.pdf>

DISCUSSION

The SCGJ observed the peak traffic pick up and drop off times at each YCUSD elementary school, then investigated Riverbend and Park Avenue. Each school sent a letter (Appendices 3 & 4) to parents regarding pickup and drop off procedures in their passenger loading zones. The letters identified problem behavior by drivers that affected wait times and safety.

In general, both schools had well marked and maintained loading areas on their campuses. Crossing guards assisted students to cross nearby streets while school staff assisted students within the loading zones. School staff did not wear a safety vest or other visible sign of their role to promote safety during pick up and drop off times, however, crossing guards did. Pavement markings were limited. At Riverbend, overgrown vegetation interfered with the line of sight, not only of drivers but of pedestrians as well, causing safety concerns (Picture 1). This was swiftly corrected within several weeks after discussion with district personnel.

SCGJ observed parent and student behavior that caused safety issues and extended the wait time for other drivers to pick up their children:

- Double parking in the street preventing other drivers from safely passing or initiating turn maneuvers. (Pictures 2 & 3).

- Parents encouraging children to cross roads outside of crosswalks;
- Older students assisting younger students to cross the street midblock, often in front of moving traffic or busses (Picture 4);
- Using No Parking zones for pickup and drop off of Riverbend students, in particular, on Garden Highway;
- Illegal use of handicap parking spaces (Picture 5);
- Sitting for lengthy periods of time in the school loading areas preventing other parents from picking up or dropping off their own children (Picture 6);
- Drivers initiating U-turns mid-block or at a ‘No U-Turn’ intersection (Stewart Road and Garden Highway);
- Unsafe conditions (double parking, stopping in traffic lanes blocking others, cutting other vehicles off), were not addressed by school personnel when observed.

Riverbend has limited street parking. Both sides of Garden Hwy adjacent to the school are posted no parking zones. There is no crosswalk mid-block near the school front despite children crossing to parents on opposite side of Stewart Road. There is no designated loading zone on Stewart Rd.

While at Park Avenue, we learned of a “WalkSacramento” site survey of Yuba City schools. These surveys were part of the development of the Yuba City 2020 Safe Routes to School Plan (SRTSP). Yuba City, YCUSD, and Caltrans worked together to have the report produced. Its goal is to promote more walking and biking to reduce emissions from vehicles, for health and exercise, and identifying safety problems along routes near schools. To make the SRTSP, preliminary data was gathered from various sources including site visits, surveys, and multiple meeting opportunities with staff, parents, and the public. The emphasis is on education and encouragement rather than enforcement regarding the benefits of safely biking and walking to and from school.

The Feather River Air Quality Management District (FRAQMD) received a grant through Blue Sky Program Funds for a School Crossing Improvement Project, and then worked with the City of Yuba City to identify funding for the local cost share and gain approval of the project. Following the installation of purchased Flashing Beacons at eight designated high visibility crosswalks near schools within the city, pedestrian and bicycle safety is expected to improve. Both these projects are designed to improve the safety of our children.

The SCGJ determined that parental behavior was the cause of the majority of the problems with pickups and drop offs but improved when observed by officers who could issue citations. A method to identify problem drivers causing severe safety problems is needed to provide education for those drivers before a tragedy occurs.

FINDINGS

- F1. One designated pickup/drop off zone is insufficient for Riverbend's 1,000+ student population during peak volume times.
- F2. Riverbend and Park Ave parents and students do not always comply with written pick up and drop off procedures.
- F3. No mid-block crosswalk on Stewart Road in front of Riverbend, leads to pedestrian jaywalking.
- F4. Drivers not following rules of the road create unsafe conditions.
- F5. Driver compliance increased when a peace officer was present.
- F6. Staff personnel did not address unsafe driver behavior.
- F7. There is no procedure in place for parents to report unsafe drivers.
- F8. School personnel did not wear identifying safety gear while guiding parents and students through loading & unloading areas.
- F9. There was a significant lack of street signage and curb markings adjacent to schools.
- F10. Riverbend Elementary School had overgrown vegetation obscured driver and pedestrian vision that created safety issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. YCUSD and the City of Yuba City work together to improve and expand pickup and drop off capability at Riverbend by December 2021.
- R2. School staff use multiple methods to educate Riverbend & Park Avenue parents and students in safe pick up and drop off areas/zones by the start of the 2020/2021 school year.
- R3. The educational staff design student programs to increase and promote traffic and pedestrian safety by the start of the 2020/2021 school year.
- R4. A survey be conducted to add a mid-block crosswalk on Stewart Road in front of Riverbend by December 2021.
- R5. Yuba City Police Department to increase periodic presence of a School Resource or Peace Officer as resources permit to deter unsafe behavior by drivers by start of 2020/2021 school year.

- R6. School staff to create a procedure for a concerned driver or parents to report serious traffic safety issues at the schools by December 31, 2020.
- R7. School staff to ensure all crossing guards, including school personnel, have adequate training and wear highly visible attire while monitoring pick up and drop off by start of 2020/2021 school year.
- R8. City of Yuba City to maintain curb painting and have clearly distinguished “No Parking” areas on the public streets adjacent to the schools by start of the 2020/2021 school year.
- R9. YCUSD to establish maintenance schedules for signage, curb and pavement markings, and overgrown vegetation on school premises by the start of 2020/2021 school year.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Sutter Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

From the following elected officials within 60 days:

- YCUSD Superintendent of Schools: F1 – F10 & R1 – R9

From the following governing bodies within 90 days:

- City Council Yuba City: F3, F4, F5, F9 & R4, R5, R8
- YCUSD Governing Board: F1 – F10 & R1 – R9

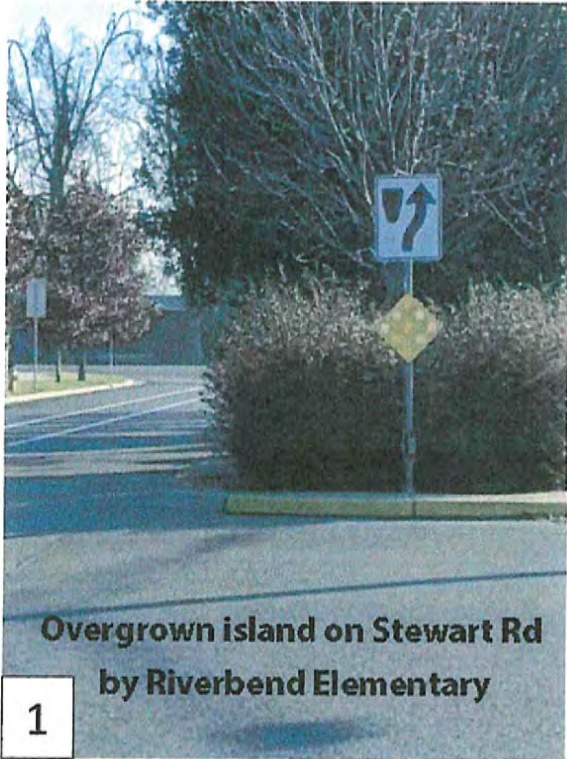
INVITED RESPONSES

- YCUSD Director of Facilities and Maintenance: F1, F3, F9, F10 & R1, R4, R9
- Yuba City Director of Public Works: F1, F3, F9, F10 & R4, R8
- Yuba City Police Chief: F3 – F5, F7 & R4 – R6

DISCLAIMER

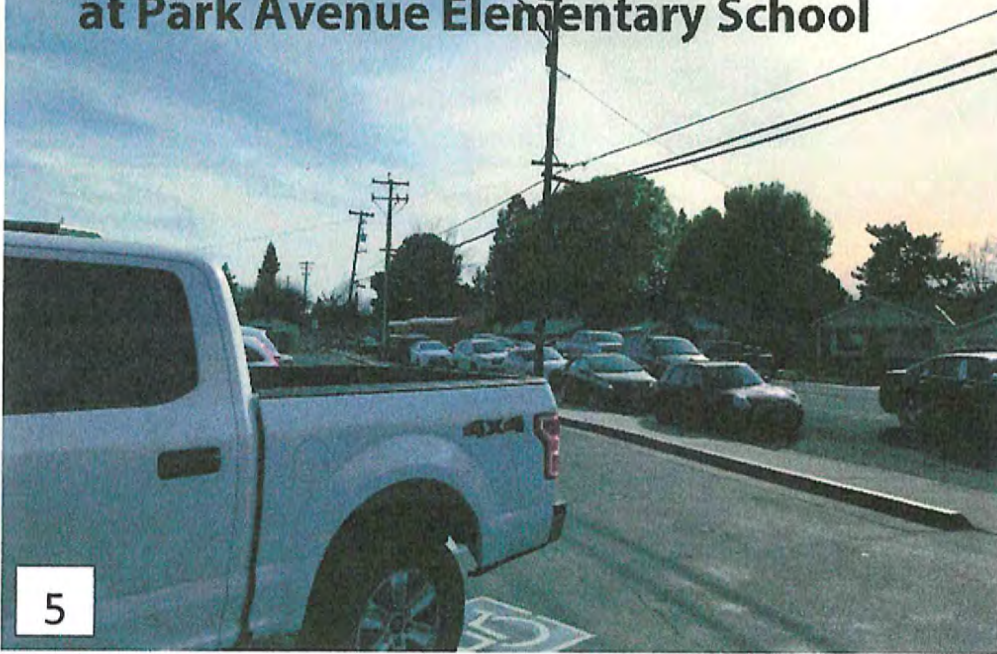
Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

Riverbend Elementary Pictures





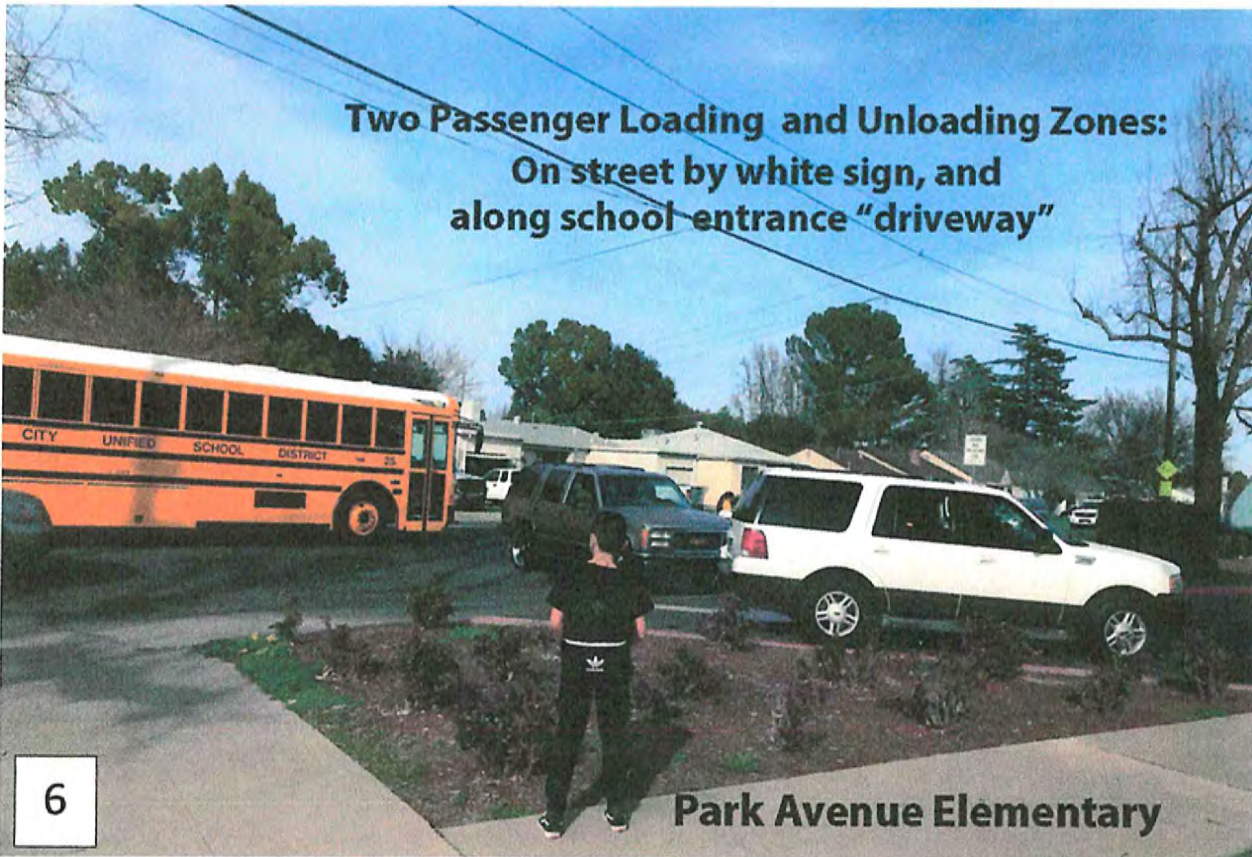
**Waiting in Handicapped parking
at Park Avenue Elementary School**



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PARK AVENUE PICTURES

**Two Passenger Loading and Unloading Zones:
On street by white sign, and
along school entrance "driveway"**

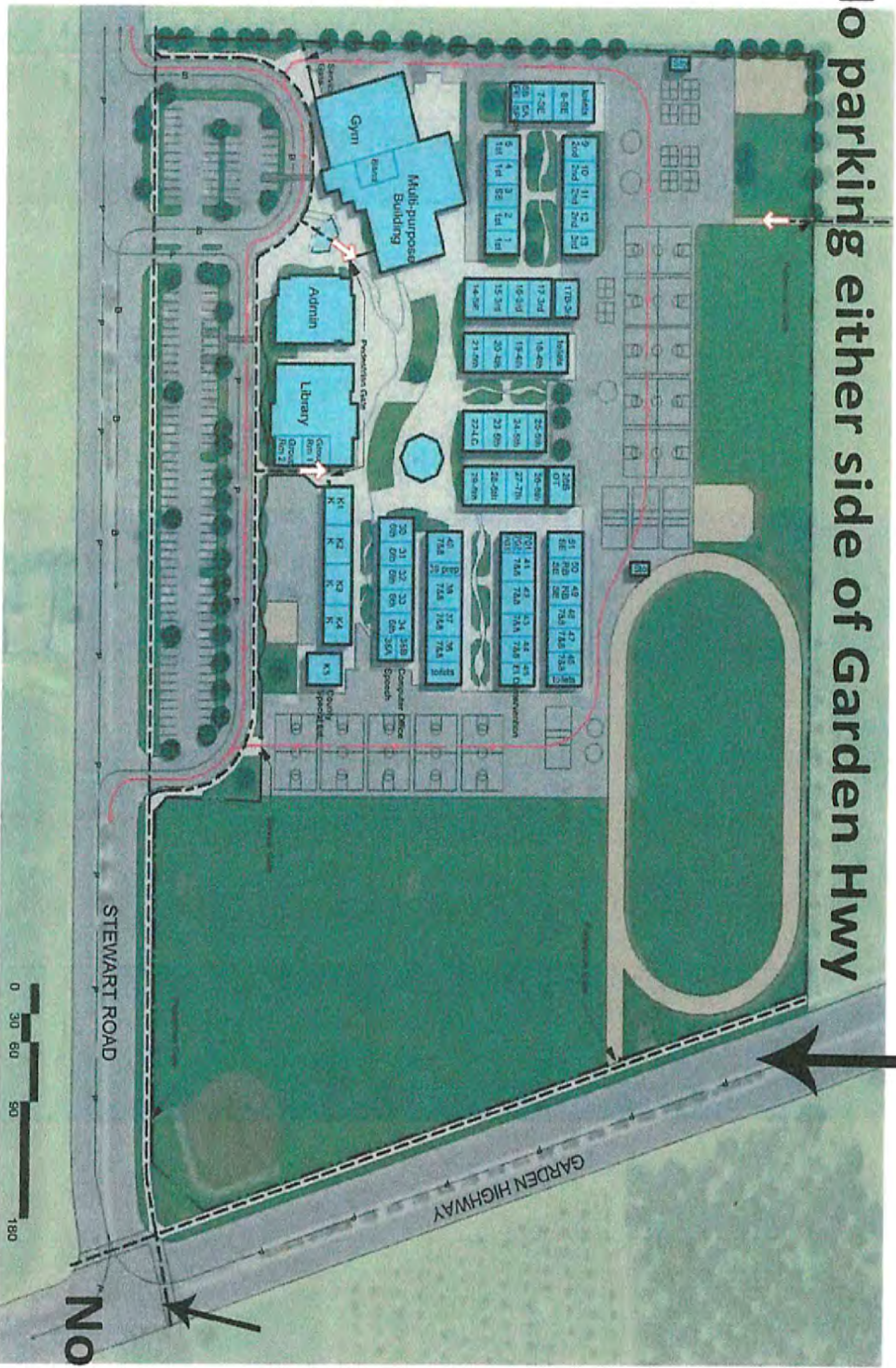


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Park Avenue Elementary

Appendix 1

No parking either side of Garden Hwy



No mid-block crosswalk on Stewart Road



Yuba City Unified School District Master Facilities Plan 2014-2024
Educating Today's Students to Succeed In Tomorrow's World

nacht&lewis.com

Riverbend Elementary (K-8)
301 Stewart Road
Yuba City, California 95991 (530) 822-3100

August 13, 2019

Dear Riverbend Parents/Guardians:

We are continuing to work on improving Riverbend's drop-off and pick-up traffic flow. The morning time school front drive-thru is meant to be a drop-off only. Please do not park your vehicle in the student drop-off lane. Parents that need extended time to assist their student(s) are encouraged to park their vehicle in one of the many parking lot spaces or along Stewart Road. We have placed various traffic flow aides in specific parking lot/drive-thru locations after observation, feedback, and consultation with YCPD and YCUSD.

Students can arrive to school beginning at 7:30am. In regards to the morning drop-off vehicle traffic flow, it would be very helpful if students were prepared with all of their items and have finished all of their communications with parents prior to the point the vehicle stops for drop-off in the drive-thru lane. There have been numerous incidences where vehicles remain stationary in the drop-off lane for an extended period of time. These types of delays add to the vehicle traffic flow problems. Always continue to move your vehicle forward, let your student exit your vehicle, and then continue to move forward and exit the school parking lot.

Students crossing the parking lot without using the crosswalk creates a serious safety concern. Please remind your student to utilize the crosswalk whenever crossing into the parking lot. Our crosswalk personnel will also try to become more efficient while crossing students by waiting until there is a break in the traffic. Also, they will wait until they have a larger group of pedestrians instead of letting small groups cross, which in turn adds to the traffic back up in the drive-thru.

During the afternoon, the lane closest to the administration building and library (painted yellow) is meant for student pick-up. The farther lane (South) is meant as a vehicle drive-thru. It is difficult for drivers to see students crossing from the pick-up lane to the drive-thru lane.

Students are not allowed to be picked-up/dropped-off at the East gate along Garden Highway. That portion of Garden Highway is labeled as a No Parking Zone by the City of Yuba City. Also, the Diamond Pointe Way gate is not meant to be used as a drop-off/pick-up point for parents using vehicles. The extra traffic is resulting in unneeded congestion in the neighborhood directly behind Riverbend. As a school, we strive to keep a positive working relationship with our school's neighbors. Handicap Parking spaces are not allowed to be entered or parked in without proper parking plates/decals. Also, vehicles are not allowed to double-park on any of the roadways in and around the school. Drivers need to follow all entering and exiting signs and blacktop painted information in our parking lot. YCPD has been made aware of these issues.

Please take a moment to discuss the importance of using proper pedestrian rules with your student. We are encouraging parents to be mindful of students, be courteous to other drivers, and abide by all vehicle safety laws. We are dedicated to student safety and would like to thank you for your help in this matter.

Sincerely,





Principal

Cc: 

Park Avenue Elementary School
Yuba City Unified School District
100 Morton Street, Yuba City, CA 95991
Phone (530)822-5265 Fax (530)822-5279

—————
Home of the Panthers!


Principal


Assistant Principal

Dear Parents and Families,

Safety is a high priority at Park Avenue School. Cooperation following procedures in the parking lot and on the streets around Park Avenue helps us keep our students and families safe.

- Please direct students to use the sidewalk and not walk through the parking lot. Following this rule yourself sets a great example for our students;
- If you need to get out of your car to meet your student, please park on the street, not in the driveway;
- Have your student get into your car on the passenger side of the car so they are not walking into traffic areas;
- Use crosswalks and follow the crossing guards' directions; do not encourage students to cross in the middle of the street .
- Please park only in areas for indicated for parking. Red zones are for emergency vehicles only.

By working together, we can keep our students safe.

Sincerely,

 principal