

Understanding the New Mann Traffic Restrictions Effective 2/11/08

In 1997, Mann became the first Oak Park public school to request help from the Village to address a growing traffic problem around Mann Elementary School. The result was a multi-tiered traffic, parking and pedestrian safety plan. The area closest to the blacktop was designated a drop-off/pick-up zone. Parking zones were established on Kenilworth, Woodbine and Berkshire east of Kenilworth for families who wished to pick up their kids at the door. Short-term parking was established in front of the school for parents to drop off forgotten lunches or pick up a sick child. Crossing Guards and Safety Patrollers were added to cross children through busy intersections to waiting cars on Kenilworth (thus creating a secondary drop-off/pick-up option) or to walk home.

Times have changed, however, and traffic has increased. Today, one-third to one-half of Mann families drive to school each day. In fact, about 90 cars go through the intersection of Kenilworth and Berkshire between 7:50 and 8:00 each morning! Everyone agreed that after ten years it was time to look at current traffic and pedestrian needs and update the Mann traffic plan accordingly.

Who was involved in the Mann traffic evaluation?

The evaluation included input from Village traffic engineers, Oak Park police, Mann administration and staff, and Oak Park's Safe Routes to School engineering consultants.

What problems were identified by Village and school staff?

One of the biggest concerns is the traffic, parking and pedestrian situation on Berkshire between Woodbine and Kenilworth. About half the cars that use the Berkshire drop-off zone enter from Woodbine, creating serious traffic and pedestrian safety issues. This means many of the families that want to cross Woodbine to use the crossing at Kenilworth cannot do so safely. Some cars use the alley between Woodbine and Kenilworth to exit the Berkshire drop-off area, again endangering pedestrians. Many families cross Berkshire at Woodbine, which is not a school crossing. Some cars double park in the drop-off zone, use the teacher's parking lot or block the parking lot driveway. Others illegally park in the drop-off zone or stop on the north side of Berkshire and wave their kids across mid-block through traffic. Finally, far too many cars are parked all the way to the corners in "No Parking" zones on Woodbine and Kenilworth, making it dangerous for crossing pedestrians to see or be seen.

There is also a big problem with families using "No parking" zones near corners on Kenilworth to drop off their kids in the morning, blocking crosswalks and forcing pedestrians to wait until they move their car. In addition, there is "No parking" zones on the drop off and pick-up area on Berkshire.

What changes will be made at Woodbine to address the problems there?

An additional barricade will be placed at the intersection of Woodbine and Berkshire during pick-up and drop-off. Cars going south on Woodbine will only be allowed to turn right (west). Cars going east on Berkshire will not be allowed to turn left (north) onto Berkshire.

Barricades will also be placed at the east Woodbine alley and at the teacher's parking lot driveway during pick-up and drop-off, protecting pedestrians and preventing unauthorized traffic.

How should cars enter and exit the Berkshire drop-off zone?

Cars should enter the Berkshire drop-off zone from Forest. You will not be allowed to turn until you get to Kenilworth.

Can children be dropped off or picked up on the north side of Berkshire west of Woodbine?

No. This is a "No Parking, No Stopping" zone. Cars attempting to pick up or drop off children on the north side of Berkshire (between Forest & Kenilworth) will be ticketed. Cars who wish to use the Berkshire drop-off/pick-up zone must enter from Forest and use the south side of the street.

Why aren't pedestrians supposed to cross Berkshire at Woodbine?

This was never intended as a school crossing. This becomes a very dangerous intersection during pick-up and drop-off. You will note there is no stop sign there. Pedestrians who attempt to cross Berkshire at Woodbine must weave through a moving line of cars.

Children should **cross Berkshire at either Forest or Kenilworth** during school hours. We ask that, even when escorting your children, you cross at either Forest or Kenilworth so that your children will develop this habit. As a reminder, signs will be placed at the corners of Woodbine and Berkshire reminding students this is not a school crossing.

But isn't there a pedestrian crosswalk at Berkshire and Woodbine?

You will notice it is a different design and color to distinguish it from a school crossing. The brick markings are there because of the park and community center. This was never intended to be a school crossing.

Why don't we just put a Crossing Guard or Safety Patroller at Woodbine/Berkshire so families can cross there?

Traffic studies have shown it is not a safe place to cross children. There is no stop sign and there is a moving line of cars on the south side of Berkshire. It is safer and more logical to place our Crossing Guard at Kenilworth and use Berkshire for the drop-off zone.

Are there any other places to drop-off children besides Berkshire?

We recommend you use one of the nearby streets—such as Kenilworth or Berkshire east of Kenilworth— and let the Crossing Guards and Safety Patrollers safely cross your children onto school grounds. Just remember: Do not drop off children at corners. This practice is dangerous and illegal, and creates a pedestrian crossing hazard.

Will there be any other changes?

Oak Park police will have an increased presence around the school during pick-up and drop-off in the coming months to make sure families follow the new traffic and parking restrictions. Cars that disregard traffic and parking restrictions will be ticketed.

Village engineers will also be watching and evaluating the new plan and making adjustments as needed. Additional changes that are being considered include better signage and yellow striping in “No Parking” zones. The Village is also bringing in consultants to update the Oak Park Public Schools Safe Routes to School plan during the 2008-2009 school year. Additional recommendations may come out of that process.

When will all this begin?

The new plan will go into effect on **Monday, February 11**. School staff, Village staff and police will be on hand to smooth the transition and answer any questions you may have. Our goal is to provide maximum safety for your children while providing as much convenience as possible for traffic and parking. Please make sure you share this information with anyone who helps pick up and/or drop off your children.