

School Overcrowding

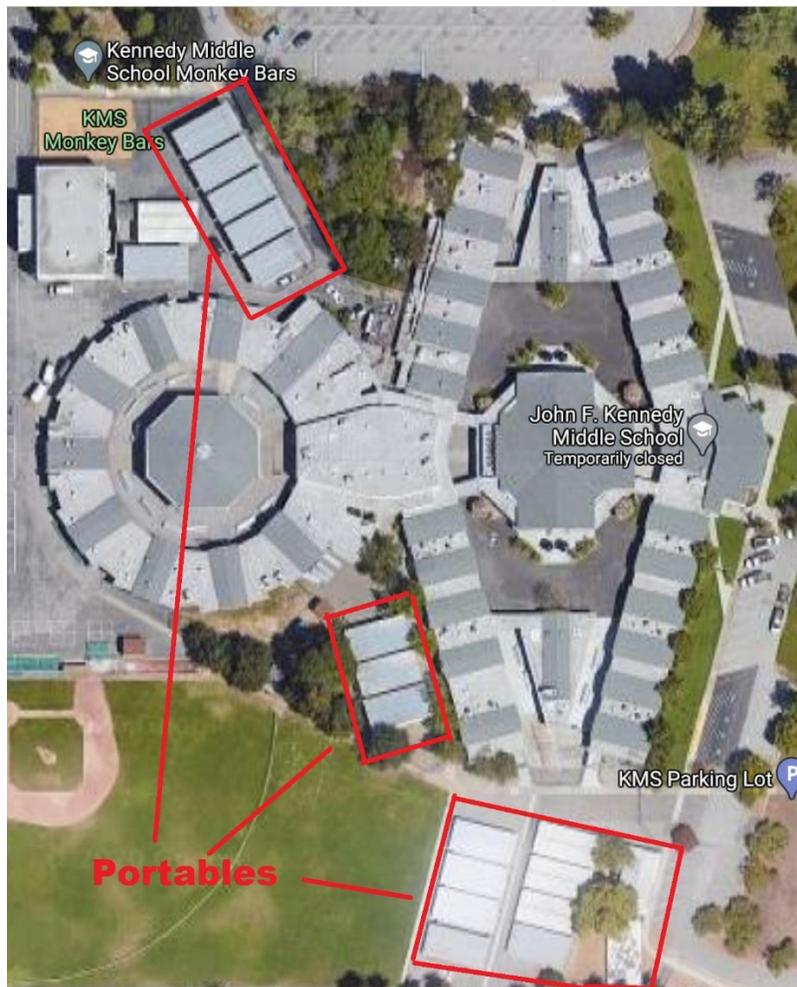
We face an odd conundrum with our schools. Some of our schools are under-enrolled. Some of our schools are over-crowded. Some of our schools are both under-enrolled AND over-crowded.

Every year we see more and more portable classrooms on our school's campuses. School impact fees paid by developers are way too low to pay for permanent buildings or to acquire land for, and build, new schools. Real estate developers enjoy massive, legal, tax breaks, that enable them to avoid contributing their fair share to infrastructure, including schools, roads, and transit—they have invested wisely not only in land, but in local, state, and federal politicians.

Millenials are now having children and many millenials may want to eventually settle in Cupertino, and we need to prepare for the next wave of school children. The City Council has tremendous influence on schools because of its power of zoning.

When land is rezoned from retail, to housing or commercial, it means that there will be more school-age children. With high-density housing you end up with a large number of school-children in a very small area. The neighborhood schools are often unable to accommodate those children so they are assigned to schools outside their neighborhood. Since there are no school buses, these children need to be driven to their distant schools.

Often the school district will add portable classrooms to a school in order to accommodate additional students. Sometimes a school will add a bunch of portables and a few years later the enrollment will fall slightly and not all the portables are needed, but there is still not enough space in the school's permanent buildings for all the students; in those cases the school is both under-enrolled and over-crowded.



A large amount of new housing is being built in areas served by both CUSD and FUHSD. It is critically important that the school districts do not dispose of any of their school properties because these properties are certain to be needed in the future unless we see permanent population shifts due to the long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and remote-working.

What can the City of Cupertino do to solve the school overcrowding problem at CUSD and FUHSD? We are a separate entity from the school districts?

What can residents and the City Council do to support our schools?

- We can elect more responsible and knowledgeable school board members who don't spend all their time pronouncing that all is wonderful with our schools just because we have high standardized test scores.
- We can insist that school board members, and school superintendents, refuse to collude with developers to build large amounts of new housing in areas with insufficient school capacity.
- We can insist that school districts plan for the future when enrollment begins to go up again. We will eventually need to reopen the leased out elementary schools, build another middle school, reopen Sunnyvale High School, and replace Blaney High School. It's hard to imagine all this right now, but we've been through this same kind of thing before.
- We can elect city council members that take into account the long-term impact on schools when they make development and rezoning decisions. We need council members with critical thinking skills that are able to look far into the future when they are making policy decisions, and that don't just look at the short term. We're not a corporation looking to maximize our quarterly results and we need to look out twenty and even fifty years.
- We can collaborate with the City Councils of other cities that serve the school districts (Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, Los Altos, San Jose, and Santa Clara) to encourage responsible development.
- We can lobby the State of California for more school funding.