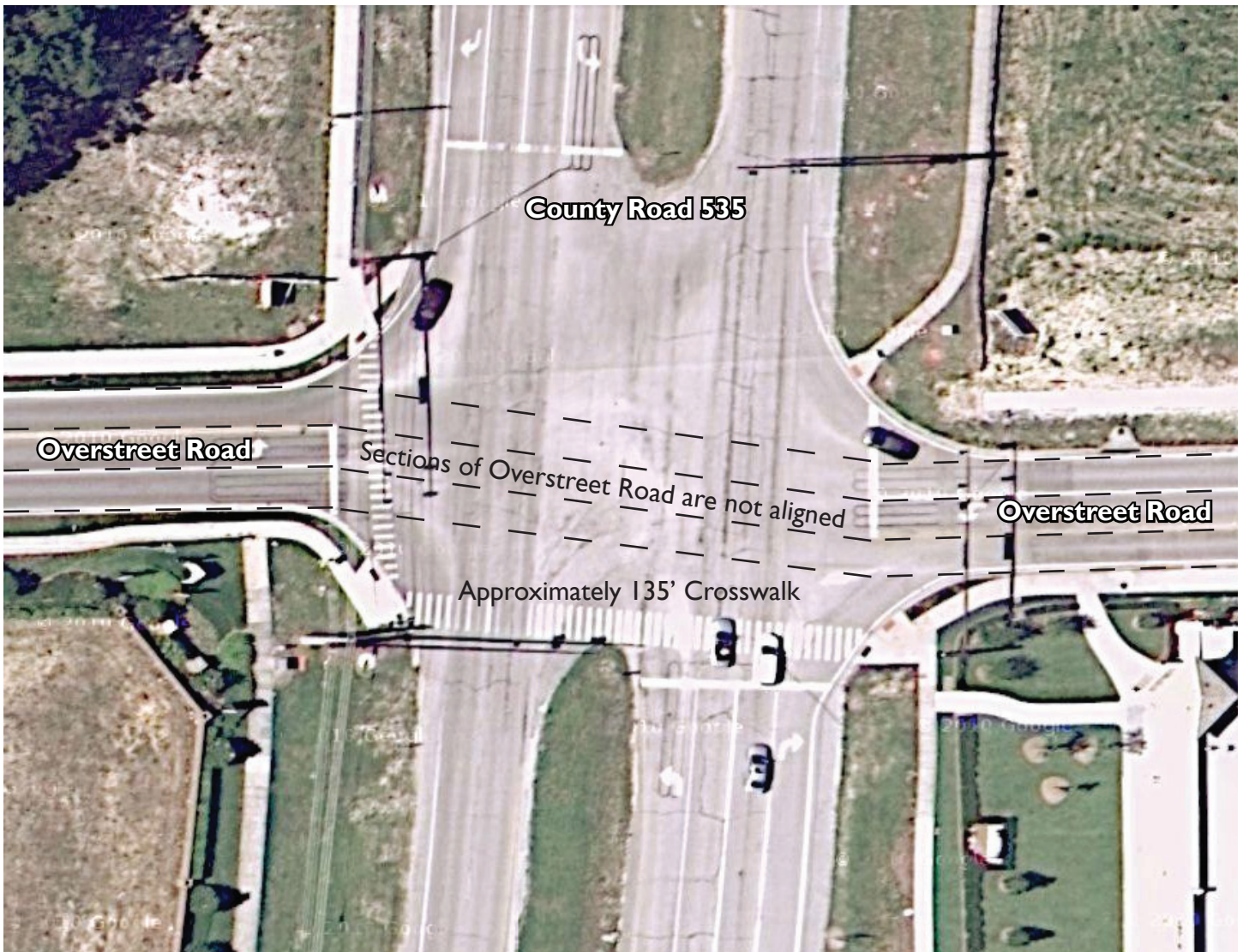




COUNTY ROAD 535 & OVERSTREET ROAD  
WINDERMERE



← Approximately 1500 homes zoned to SPES

Sunset Park Elementary School →

1"=50'



Many children walk to Sunset Park Elementary School each weekday through the intersection of County Road 535 and Overstreet Road. Unfortunately, this intersection was not designed for pedestrians. Neighborhood schools, such as Sunset Park Elementary, are an integral and essential element of Horizon West. This intersection is a dangerous physical barrier for most of the residents zoned for the school.

The sections of Overstreet Road that are separated by County Road 535 do not align. This is confusing for drivers and a risky element already.

Road design regulates speed better than a speed limit sign. County Road 535, also known as Winter Garden - Vineland Road, is a wide four-lane artery. The lanes are a generous 12' each in width, and the shoulder is flat and broad. The road was designed for speed and for moving drivers through the area quickly. Wide lanes, especially on a road with no curbs, induce speed as drivers feel comfortable moving at a faster pace with no hard edge to steer clear of. In fact, less than one mile south of this intersection, CR535 consists of elevated acceleration banks (high bank on the outside portion of the turn to accommodate speed).

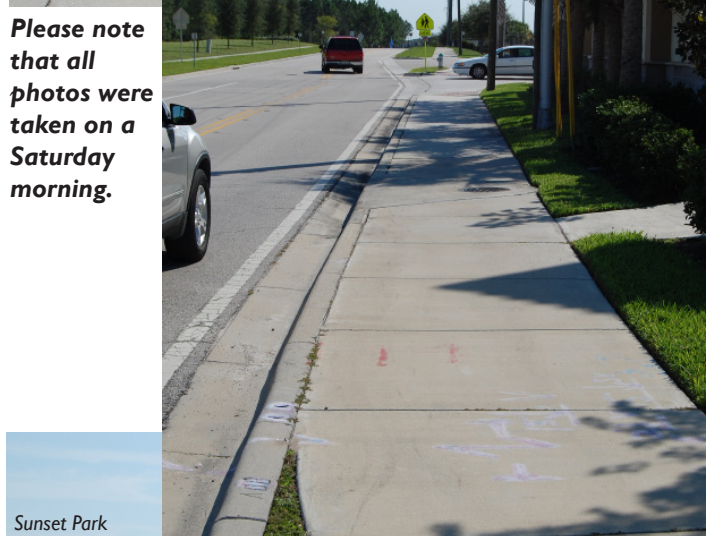
Until last spring, the speed limit was 55 mph at this zone. Thanks to parental involvement, since then, we have seen the addition of concurrent no turn lights during the use of the crosswalks.

The east/west crosswalk, over CR535, is approximately 135 feet long. In addition, upon stepping into this crosswalk, there is no area of refuge (a place to stop in the median for example) to give real or perceived safety.

After crossing CR535, there is a section of sidewalk, against Walgreens, in which there is no buffer between the sidewalk and the street. Drivers coming from the north and turning left onto Overstreet must practice diligence to turn carefully between the stack of vehicles waiting to exit from Overstreet and the children on this portion of the sidewalk.

There are two other unavoidable points of vehicular egress to cross before arriving at the school. These are at the Lake Burden Shops and the school's bus loop. Walking on the opposite side of Overstreet is not an option because, due to the school's location, the main crosswalk over CR535 is at the south portion of the intersection.

So there you have it. The neighborhood school is on one side of this dangerous intersection, and the families for which it serves reside on the other.



What can be done to alleviate the danger? Some elements are simply unavoidable including the fact that many people use the CR535 corridor. Safe pedestrian crossings, however, should have been part of the original design of this road network.

There were features that could have been implemented to give safety for pedestrians who choose to cross this intersection, rather real or perceived, in this part of Horizon West, a ‘walkable’ community.

First, traffic lanes could have been tapered to be narrower through this school zone. Drivers typically maneuver more slowly through narrow lanes. The construction of curbs, rather than simply at the intersection’s corners, would have also slowed drivers. Having a hard elevated edge causes drivers to slow and elevates pedestrians allowing them to feel a certain level of safety. This would have been effective at slowing the vehicular traffic.



The addition of trees in the median and on the shoulders close to the pavement edge would have given a buffer, or at the very least, a perceived buffer between moving traffic and pedestrians. The simple addition of trees closer to the roadway creates the perceived need to slow down. This too would have created a feeling of enclosure and a demarcation between the vehicular realm and the pedestrian environment. The benefits to pedestrian safety through using street trees has been proven through many studies.

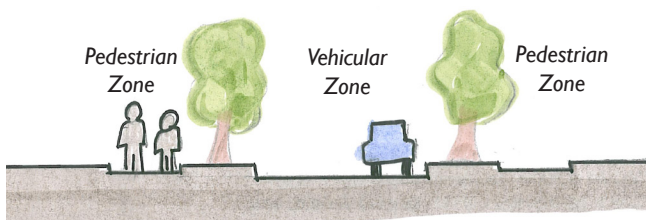
*“...the presence of a well defined roadside edge may be leading drivers to exercise greater caution.”*

Safe Streets, Livable Streets, by Eric Dumbaugh  
Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 71, No. 3, Summer 2005  
(<http://www.ufe.org/files/pubs/22BenefitsofUrbanStreetTrees.pdf>)



We should take notice of the upgraded aesthetic quality and environmental impact that come with the addition of street trees as well. Neither Overstreet or CR535 feature street trees between the sidewalk and roadway.

Pavement changes could have been integrated. Pavement with an increased texture causes drivers to reduce their speed. A few bands of texture change could have indicated the driver’s entrance into this slower zone as well as cause him/her to slow down. Consider, for example, the speed of traffic on streets constructed with cobblestone or pavers.



Efforts should be made to alleviate the dangerous conditions to pedestrians at the intersection of Overstreet Road and County Road 535. This will require addressing the road treatment before drivers arrive at this intersection.