

Garbers Church Road Shared Use Path Public Comments and Responses

The response from the public resulting from the November 9th public meeting and subsequent public comment period was overwhelmingly positive. 77 individuals submitted comments in the form of comment sheets provided by Public Works, letters, and on BeHeardHarrisonburg.com. Comments and responses below include only the ones relating to opposition, concerns, questions, and suggestions.

*Comments related to a common theme are grouped by color.

	Primary Comment	Frequency	Response
1	There should not be a path put on Wyndham Dr. Comments 2 through 16 are related to this comment.	7	Addressed in responses below.
2	Pedestrians can use Wyndham Dr, which is well lit, low traffic, and leads directly to existing path up to THMS.	10	Separation from the 13 private entrances on Wyndham Drive is the most desirable outcome. The current street and path to the middle school are currently only serving traffic to the middle school. The new path is meant to serve traffic from multiple directions and serve multiple schools, one park initially, and ultimately 2 parks, including the community center. We expect there to be enough conflicting traffic that a separate facility is more than warranted.
3	It is not worth the cost, given Wyndham Drive serving the same purpose.	5	See response to #2
4	Put facilities in the front	3	Again, with the expected number of people using the facility, separation from the conflict points (the driveway entrances) is the most desirable outcome.
5	It will reduce the property values of the affected homes.	4	We understand the residents' perception that property values would fall as a result of the trail. However, research suggests that there is demand for homes along shared use paths. Studies show that properties sell for more money, and sell quicker than comparable homes without a shared use path.
6	Loss of property	2	Property owners would be compensated fairly for any property obtained for the trail.
7	Loss of privacy	5	Screening measures, such as privacy fences or landscape screening will be examined with affected property owners.
8	Home security	7	Studies have shown that the risk on crime on shared use paths is extremely minimal, and well below crime rates for communities as a whole (see sources above). However, intervention measures, such as privacy fences or landscape screening will be examined with affected property owners.
9	Risk to security of the children in these backyards.	8	See response to #8
10	Increase in noise / Will exacerbate an existing nuisance dog barking problem	5	See response to #8
11	Trash	1	Public Works is responsible for maintenance of the trail, including litter removal. We anticipate that there will be some non-governmental groups volunteering to do clean ups, also, if needed.
12	This is a "nice to have" but not essential connection.	1	
13	Disruptive to the quality of life in a quiet and safe area.	2	See response to #8
14	Lighting on this section would be a nuisance to the property owners	2	No lighting is planned for the trail, particularly on the section along the powerline easement.
15	Lack of lighting will be a safety hazard and expose the city to liability.	1	An unlit trail exposes the City to no more liability than an unlit road or park.
16	Cyclists and pedestrians will continue to use Wyndham Dr. instead of the path because it is the most direct route.	1	Public Works feels that people will choose to stay on the path, instead of taking the street for this section.
17	Please also consider seating along the path. People will want to rest along the way.	3	Public Works will make note of this.
18	Same as comment 17, where grades are >5%	1	
19	Include little pocket parks, places where small children could play.	1	While we appreciate the desire for the tot lot concept, the intent, for now, is to provide a safe bicycle and pedestrian route primarily for transportation purposes. Public Works is also trying to minimize impacts to property owners along the alignment to the greatest extent possible. We recommend communicating the desire for this kind of amenity to the City's Parks and Recreation Commission.

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20	I feel it will not be used enough for it's inteded purpose	1	The trail serves major daily destinations, and has been a requested amenity for over a decade. Those that choose to walk or ride to schools, parks, and elsewhere are doing a service to the community by reducing demand on the street network. Providing infrastructure to allow them to travel safely is a priority for the City.
21	Include wayfinding signage &/or lighting	13 & Community Organization	Wayfinding signage will be implemented with the project. Lighting along the powerline easement will not be possible for safety reasons involving electricity. The majority of the path follows this easement. The trail will be lit where it follows Garbers Church Road. Public Works is exploring strategies to assist with visibility without installing lighting.
22	Include a trail kiosk to inform on trail etiquette.	1	Public Works is currently working on the development of this signage.
23	Include interpretation of the landscape.	1	See response to #19. The thought to enhance the trail is appreciated; this suggestion will be referred to City staff that are involved in environmental education. May also be a good suggestion for non-government groups, such as the Master Naturalists.
24	There should be an additional entrance for the path to the high school closer to the entrance of Hillandale Park. On the current plan if you enter Hillandale from Dogwood you have to ride to the back of the park and then backtrack on the path before you start heading towards the high school.	1	The current plan takes bicyclist and pedestrians about half way through the park to stay on the paved trail that connects to Garbers Church Road. There is a gravel path that connects to the trail closer to the entrance of the park (~0.1 miles closer than the planned paved connection and bridge replacement). The original plan was to replace the near and far bridges and pave both connections to Hillandale Ave. The connection closer to the park entrance was removed from the plans after initial costs were assessed. Replacing the farther bridge reduces the length that bicycles and pedestrians must share Hillandale Drive with vehicles for those enroute to and from THMS and Westover Park/Community Center, as well those enroute to the High School and/or Bluestone ES accessing the trail east and north of Wyndham Woods Circle.
25	The path really needs to go door to door to all the schools. Special attention should be given to the Garbers Church crossing at the high school.	1	Funds were not included in this phase of the project to connect to the door of Thomas Harrisonburg Middle School. This will be looked at as we develop future connections to the path. HHS and Blueston Elementary school will be fully connected, since these properties already have sidewalks connecting to the building. The Garbers Church Road crossing to the high school is controlled by a traffic signal, which includes a pedestrian signal. Public Works, in cooperation with the police department, will assess compliance by both pedestrians and motorists with yielding laws, and whether the intersection warrants additional signage, in addition to public education.
26	Don't use the alternate path for the high school, the extra curves just make it longer.	1	The alternative alignment between Hillandale Park and Garbers Church Road will ultimately be the safest route for the path, as the vacant parcel the path crosses is likely to develop (currently zoned R-1), and when it does, one or more additional intersections with Garbers Church are likely. The alternate alignment avoids the additioanl intersection crossings. Additionally, in its current land use, livestock are grazed across three parcels. The alternative alignment precludes having to accomodate a livestock crossing, and the danger posed by conflicts between people and livestock.
27	The deceleration lane at Garbers Church Road and Heritage Estates should remain, as eliminating it would create a hazard for residents and visitors.	1	The two northbound travel lanes are adequate to allow traffic to maneuver around turning vehicles, as they do on many other 4- and 5-lane roads throughout the city. The safety benefit of adding the sidewalk to this area must be compared with the safety benefit provided by a deceleration lane.
28	Save money by using Hillandale Ave (the park road) instead of building the portion of trail between the foot bridges.	1	The goal is to separate vehicles and bicycles and pedestrians as much as is feasible, given budget constraints. One of the bridges needs to be replaced to accommodate the bike/ped traffic, either way, and following the planned alignment helps to avoid more difficult grades at other potential connection points along Hillandale Ave.
29	The portion of the 16th hole of the golf course closest to the planned trail is rarely used by golfers, as they tend to cut toward the green before that. That part of that hole could be used to avoid impacts to the property owner.	1	People need to have confidence in the safety of the trail, which means we need to allow for a margin of golfer error between the hole and the path.
30	We would like to know when right-of-way is obtained so we may begin using it.		Following the completion of right of way aquisiton the City will begin construction, and access will be restricted until completion of the construction.

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31	At future public meetings, provide: an exhibit showing budget and long-term master plan; a timeline; cost and funding	2	Thank you for this feedback. We will consider this when preparing for future public involvement.
32	Willow Lane property owners opposed to the path through their property. Comments 36 through 40 are related this is comment.		Addressed in responses below.
33	Livestock pasture adjacent to the path seems like a recipe for disaster.	2	Options for fencing and landscape screening to provide ample separation between the livestock and the public will be discussed with the property owners.
34	Unreasonable to go through private property when the City-owned golf course is right there and could be used for this purpose.	2	The golf course could not be used for this purpose without redesigning and reconstructing it. The project could not bare these costs.
35	The path will have a negative impact on the value of the property.	1	See response to comment #5
36	It is taking too much of the property.	1	The engineering of the path has taken special care to reduce the impact to the property as much as is possible while still meeting design standards for curve radii, maximum grades, drainage, etc.
37	It will make the property difficult to sell.	1	Public Works understand the theory that easements introduce uncertainty into the real estate process. However, the vision for the trail is completely transparent, so there is no question as to what will be built in the easement/right of way. Assuming prospective purchasers are developers, studies show that the presence of such an amenity helps to sell homes, and at a premium. Developers will be fully aware of the limits and vision for the path, allowing them to design the site to be compatible with the path.
38	Preference for alignment 1A (alternate alignment throught Willow Lane property)	3	
39	The path should use the shortest distance path to connect to the destinations (schools).	4	Care has been taken to provide the shortest distance path, while avoiding costly conflicts.
40	It is short-sighted to favor the few golfers over the ubiquitous schools community.	1	Both facilities are assets to the community. The project design sought to accommodate both.
	The shortest distance path would be through the golf course.	1	The project will provide a safe and convenient pedestrian route, while avoiding costly impacts to the golf course.
41	Coordinate signage with Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance logo/signage update?	1	We will discuss signage content and design with the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, as well as those implementing similar signage for JMU. We will discuss this with HDR, recognizing that the path isn't downtown, but may be used to access downtown.
42	Additonal connections needed	3	Additional connections will be added in the future.
43	Concern that the trail can only be legally access from Hillandale Dr. and Wyndham Woods Circle on the northern/eastern half of the trail, which is limiting for a large amount of the students north of W. Market Street that attend Bluestone ES and HHS.	Community organization	This will be considered when planning future connections to the path. For now, the path can be accessed from the Thomas Harrison Middle School property, but there is no improved path on the school property.
44	Connect the Wyndham Dr. section to W. Market St.	5 indiv. & Community Org.	This will be considered when planning future connections to the path.
45	Request for additional public consultation if alignment or other details change before final design	Community organization	This can be accomodated.
46	If the trail must use part of Hillandale Drive, build a wide shoulder and buffer it with paint and flexible posts	Community organization	Separation options will be discussed with Parks and Recreation. It is desirable to have the facility separated from vehicular traffic, however, Hillandale Avenue is considered a very low-risk street, as it is only 15mph, and is currently shared between vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.