



The City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Office of the Public Works Department

STREET MAINTENANCE
TRAFFIC ENGINEERING
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
REFUSE/ RECYCLING
CENTRAL STORES

Memorandum

To: Kurt Hodgen, City Manager
City Council Members

From: Brad Reed, Transportation Planner

CC: Jim Baker, Tom Hartman, Thanh Dang, Chief Stephen Monticelli,
Sgt. Pete Ritchie, Ofc. Wayne Westfall

Date: July 22, 2015

Re: Sunset Heights neighborhood traffic study

Residents from the Sunset Heights neighborhood are submitting the attached request to City Council for a traffic study to evaluate speeding and cut-through traffic on their residential streets. This study is being requested because it is a prerequisite to consideration for enrollment in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. It is anticipated that the requested traffic study will encompass 13 study locations and require approximately 24 hours of Public Works staff time over a two week period to complete. Residents have requested that the study occur in September after the JMU fall semester has begun so that the data captures the affects of the presence of the student population.

Sunset Heights residents have expressed concerns about drivers traveling too fast on neighborhood streets, passing stopped school buses and other motor vehicles driving the speed limit, and using streets such as South Dogwood Drive and Chestnut Drive as a cut-through route to avoid South High Street. To address these issues, the Police Department increased enforcement on neighborhood streets starting in March and has used its speed display to encourage slower driving. In May, the Public Works Department provided residents with the materials needed to participate in the Team Up to Slow Down Program, including yard signs, bumper stickers, and safe driving pledge cards. Participation in this program was very good, with all 23 yard signs loaned out being installed at residences on various streets.

On June 9, 2015 a group of 12 neighborhood residents representing various streets met with Police and Public Works staff members to discuss their specific traffic concerns. This discussion included a review of actions taken by the city to address the concerns already received and what future course of action can be taken by the residents to pursue enrollment in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. A summary of this meeting is attached here.

We ask that City Council please review the attached request and provide staff with a response at their July 28 meeting.

Dear Harrisonburg City Council,

Out of concern for the vehicular behaviors present on our streets, the residents of SUNSET HEIGHTS neighborhood request that the City of Harrisonburg conduct a traffic and speed study for consideration of our neighborhood's enrollment into the City's Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. We have specific concerns with speeding and cut-through traffic on the following streets (list all street names):

S Dogwood Dr Sunrise Ave Elmwood Dr
Chestnut Dr New York Ave W Grace St
S Willow St Ohio Ave
Maryland Ave Dixie Ave

Enclosed is our documentation showing the dates we have made requests to Harrisonburg Police Department for increased enforcement on our neighborhood streets, dates which we have utilized the Team Up to Slow Down Program, dates we have discussed our concerns with our neighbors, and other encouragement measures we have used in the last 12 months.

We understand that City staff will assist us with identifying the study and petition area and that following the completion of the traffic and speed study, we may begin the petitioning process.

I, Tim LAPIRA, will be the point of contact and will act as a liaison between City staff and my neighborhood. I will represent my neighborhood interests and get information about community meetings to my neighbors.

Sincerely,



Signature

Printed Name: TIM LAPIRA

Address: 508 S. DOGWOOD DR.

Phone Number: 540-433-1289

E-mail Address: LAPIRATIM@JMU.EDU

Date: 6/9/15

Attachments: Neighborhood documentation (to be attached by neighbors, Police enforcement report (to be attached by City staff)

CC: City Manager, Public Works, Harrisonburg Police

Dates we have made requests to Harrisonburg Police Department for increased enforcement on neighborhood streets:

March-April 2015

Enforcement requests have also been made in years prior.

Dates we have utilized the Team Up to Slow Down Program:

May 2015

Dates we have discussed our concerns with our neighbors:

March-April 2015

Other resident discussions have taken place in years prior. A group of residents representing various streets in the neighborhood met with Public Works and Police Department staff on June 9, 2015 to discuss resident concerns and review planned enforcement actions.

Neighborhood Traffic Calming – Sunset Heights
June 9, 2015 @ 6PM
Community Activities Center, Westover Park

Introductions

In attendance were 12 neighborhood residents representing various streets, 3 staff members from the Public Works Department, Officer Westfall with the Police Department, and Len Van Wyk who is the southwest area member of the Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission. A Sign-in sheet for the individuals present is attached at the bottom of this summary.

How We Got Here

Public Works and Police Department staff provided background on the interactions between neighborhood residents and city staff, which included the following concerns and related follow-up actions:

- Speeding and cut-through traffic on S Dogwood Dr and other neighborhood streets
 - HPD has increased enforcement on neighborhood streets in recent months and has used its speed display to encourage slower speeds
 - The speed display will be installed again soon after this meeting. Enforcement will be increased as well, with lower speed tolerances being applied for both warnings and summonses.
 - Traffic signal timings and coordination are regularly updated to improve vehicle flow on S High St, which helps make it an attractive route and reduces the desire for neighborhood cut-through trips
 - Residents on various streets have participated in the Team Up to Slow Down program, which includes distribution of yard signs, bumper stickers, and pledge cards to encourage drivers to travel safely on neighborhood streets. More information on the program is available at: <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/team-up-to-slow-down>
- Drivers passing stopped school buses on S Dogwood Dr
 - The initial complaint was received close to the end of the 2014-2015 school year. HPD will start up enforcement again when school starts in Fall 2015.
 - HPD cited drivers using video from the school bus camera

Discussion

Residents related their thoughts and concerns about traffic in the neighborhood, including hot spots for certain issues. The general topics discussed are summarized here:

- Mr. LaPira thanked HPD for their response and said it was notable, but said there is a limit to what the police can do. He said that the school bus passing and speeding issues are indicative of bigger problems, including how wide streets such as S Dogwood Dr and Chestnut Dr are and a lack of 4-way stops to discourage through traffic. The street does not feel like a slow neighborhood street, so the inclination is to drive fast. These characteristics create an invitation for cut-through traffic. He said that stop sign roll-through is common, as are zigzags to avoid stop signs.
- The bus passing issue seems worse this year with the new bus driver. The old driver would stop the bus sideways to prevent cars from passing. Can the other drivers do this?
 - Ofc. Westfall said he can ask about the legality and possibility of this
- Chestnut Dr/St Willow St

- Speeding and cut-through traffic are issues. Route seems popular for JMU students to access the rear entrance to Memorial Hall.
- Residents have seen drivers passing other drivers in areas without parked cars
- Speeds are high on S Willow St from Chestnut Dr to W Market St. Can chicanes/bulb outs be used? City staff said that such physical improvements could be considered as part of the neighborhood's traffic calming plan after enrollment in the program.
- S Dogwood Dr
 - Speeding and cut-through traffic are issues.
 - Residents have seen drivers passing other drivers between W Market St and Maryland Ave.
 - Would sidewalks make the street safer? City staff said that pedestrian travel would be safer, but sidewalks should not be expected to influence vehicle speeds.
 - Can a shared use path be put on S Dogwood Dr and the street width reduced? The group said this would be difficult and may require the street to be converted to one-way.
 - There is also "drag race" activity occurring at 2am-3am.
- JMU is a problem for neighborhood traffic issues, but there is also a lot of thru traffic traveling from W Market St to S High St
- S Willow St, Chestnut Dr, and Grace St intersection: people seem to misunderstand who has to stop
- Drivers make fast turns onto westbound Maryland Ave from S Dogwood Dr and Chestnut Dr
- Are there ways to make the existing stop signs more visible?
 - Stop bars (white street markings at the stop sign) could be added to do this. Public Works will make note of the locations without them and determine the availability of materials and funding.
- Toppin Blvd speeding
 - Some seem to think the street is a cut-through because the dead end sign is hard to see behind tree limbs
 - Public Works will evaluate the sign location and whether vegetation needs to be trimmed to improve its visibility
- Do GPS units and mapping websites lead people through the neighborhood? This could be contributing to cut-through traffic.
 - Residents have spotted vehicles turning around at the end of Maryland Ave and South Ave. Are there drawn as through streets anywhere? Public Works will look into this and request revisions to mapping companies if that is the case.

Next Steps

Public Works staff explained the process for joining the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. Residents would first need to submit a request to City Council for a formal traffic study. If approved, the traffic study would be completed and results would be reviewed to determine the neighborhood's eligibility for the program. Eligibility is determined by whether the locations studied exceed the minimum traffic volume requirements, 85th percentile speed threshold, and whether streets in the neighborhood have documented cut-through traffic. If the neighborhood is eligible for the program, then a petition with the signatures of 75% of the households in the neighborhood would need to be submitted to City Council to request enrollment. The neighborhood area would be developed after the traffic study is completed so that it reflects the core areas where traffic problems are present. The petition process ensures that there is majority neighborhood buy-in for traffic calming improvements

and is also a good way to reach out to people to request their participation in the process. Though physical measures such as speed humps can only be installed through enrollment in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program, solutions to issues that only require painting and signage can be considered now. Public Works and the Police Department will take the actions noted in this summary. More information on the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program is available at: <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/neighborhood-traffic-calming-program>.

Residents completed the form to request a neighborhood-wide traffic study and worked with city staff to select 13 specific study locations. The study area is bounded by South Ave, Elmwood Dr, W Market St, and S High St. Residents requested that this study be completed in September 2015 after JMU has returned to regular session to catch the time when traffic is at its peak. The request form will be submitted soon for City Council review.

Traffic study results would be shared with the neighborhood representatives once they're ready. A follow-up meeting with the group would then be scheduled to discuss actions taken over the summer, the results of the study, definition of the neighborhood petition area, and next steps.



NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

NEIGHBORHOOD NAME: Sunset Heights

DATE: 6/9/2015

NAME	STREET ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL
MPO W. E. Westfall Jr. THANH DANG	6 East Left Ln HURG PW	540 560-5771 540-434-6928	W.E. Westfall @HarrisonburgVA.GOV THANH.DANG@HARRISONBURGVA.GOV
TOM NEWMAN	H-BURG - BPW	540-434-5928	TOM.NEWMAN@HARRISONBURGVA.GOV
Brad Reed & David Kira Newman	Hburg PW 750 S. Dogwood Dr	540-434-5928 540-860-8048	brad.reed@harrisonburgva.gov Kira: newman@icloud.com
Kari Carpenter	310 Ohio Ave	540 578-2364	Kcarpenter@rockingham.k12.va.us
Katie Overfield-Zook	1018 Toppin Blvd	(540) 908-3791	Ktula02@gmail.com
Bill Grant	341 New York Ave.	540-434-1486	grantwc@jmu.edu
NellMarie Colman	815 Elmwood Dr.	540-818-5267	Nellmariec@gmail.com
Tim LAFIRA	508 S. DISCWOOD DR.	540 433-1289	LAFIRA@JMU.EDU.



NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

NEIGHBORHOOD NAME: Sunset Heights

DATE: 6/9/2015

NAME	STREET ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL
Mark Hermes Ms Murrowey	655 S. Dogwood Dr.		nydogwood@gmail.com.
Quillon Hall	675 New York Ave		1028qwh@comcast.net
DANA HARSBERGER	195 SOUTH WILLAN		DANA.HARSBERGER@GMAIL.COM
Gil Colman	815 Elmwood Dr.		guilleri@gmail.com
Len Van Wyk	H'burg Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission		len.vanwyk@gmail.com