



Howard County Citizens Association
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The Voice Of The People of Howard County

Honorable Allan H. Kittleman and County Council Members
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Subject: Preserving Neighborhood Streets from Cut-Thru Traffic

Dear County Executive Kittleman and County Council Members:

We, the undersigned organization ask you to change the Howard County policy requiring the conversion of neighborhood streets into thru roads when new development is proposed. An example of the effect of this policy is shown in the two aerial photos of Fulton Estates Court on the next page of this letter.

Approximately half of the 3500+ streets in Howard County are cul-de-sacs (courts, stub roads, or other dead-end streets) precluding cut-thru traffic. With increasing traffic volume on Howard County main roads and the widespread use of GPS, drivers are making ever greater use of neighborhood thru-streets to avoid congestion. Cut-thru traffic tends toward higher speeds which increases the likelihood and severity of pedestrian injury. Pedestrian injuries due to automobile collisions has been cited as a leading cause of death among children aged 5 to 14 years. According to [Safe Kids Worldwide](#): "Traffic-calming measures such as speed humps are associated with an estimated reduction of 53 to 60 percent in the risk of injury or death among children struck by an automobile in their neighborhood." It is for these reasons that converting cul-de-sac into thru roads makes neighborhood streets more dangerous.

We have been working with Richard Klein, of Community & Environmental Defense Services who determined that a large percentage of those living on Howard County cul-de-sacs support a change to the policy resulting in the conversion of neighborhood streets into thru-roads. This is based upon a survey mailed to 700 Howard County cul-de-sac residents. The response rate was ten times higher than the average for direct-mail surveys, all of whom supported the policy change. We believe this demonstrates overwhelming support for measures to safeguard those living on neighborhood cul-de-sac streets. While we realize that the road connectivity policy is intended to enhance public safety by providing a second means of access, we believe this same benefit can be achieved without exposing those who live on quiet, safe neighborhood streets to a dramatic increase in traffic volume.

The policy appears on page 2-10, of the [Howard County Design Manual Volume III](#) which only calls for a second means of access when more than 100 homes are proposed. Yet cul-de-sac streets are being turned into thru-roads when far fewer new homes are involved. For example, the Lyhus Property shown on the previous page consists of only 29 proposed homes, yet a second access is being required via a connection to Fulton Estates Court.

In addition to emergency services access, other reasons given by County staff for this policy are improved circulation and increased community interaction. We believe the decreased safety of our neighborhood streets far outweighs whatever circulation and interaction benefits are derived from turning cul-de-sacs into thru-roads. We believe the following modifications to this policy would meet emergency access needs:

- 1) Only require an extension of a cul-de-sac when it is absolutely necessary for public safety,
- 2) Do not require an extension when less than one hundred homes are proposed,
- 3) If an extension would create the possibility of cut-thru traffic then require:
 - a) The installation of a gate across the extension that can only be opened by police, fire, ambulance or other emergency services personnel, or
 - b) Use of traffic calming or other measures that effectively discourages cut-thru traffic and slows vehicle speed.

We believe the development community would be open to these options. In fact, during recent negotiations with the developers of two proposed projects in the Howard County review process, they stated their willingness to employ the options listed about but said County officials were opposed.

We would deeply appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss these or any other options that would achieve the goal. Richard Klein, of Community & Environmental Defense Services, is assisting us with this neighborhood preservation effort. He will call in a few days to discuss meeting dates. In the meantime Richard can be reached at 410-654-3021 or Rklein@ceds.org.

Sincerely,

Stu Kohn
HCCA, President