

HILLANDALE CITIZENS ASSOCIATION (HCA)
Town Hall Meeting – 24 January 2019
(Topics and comments suggested by meeting participants)

TRAFFIC

Problems identified:

- 1) Speeding on neighborhood streets
 - *Need speed bumps—esp. on Cresthaven Drive (Schindler Drive?)
 - *In the interim, would like more police enforcement
- 2) Ignoring school bus flashing lights
 - *Would like more police enforcement
- 3) Ignoring or rolling through stop signs
 - * Especially noted: Overlook Drive onto New Hampshire Ave.
 - * Need more signs: stop signs and other signs
- 4) Cut-through traffic (especially east of New Hampshire)
- 5) Noted that New Hampshire traffic is heavier and slower than before

Incident of November 17, 2018:

WSSC blocked New Hampshire for emergency fix of a water main break, which caused a massive traffic jam, both on New Hampshire and in the neighborhood streets east of New Hampshire, where frustrated drivers sought a bypass unsuccessfully.

Lessons learned:

- 1) There needs to be a reader board informing drivers of a viable detour
(Drivers were totally confused during this episode.)
- 2) There needs to be police direction (there was none that day, reportedly)
- 3) There needs to be better communication among the various agencies in charge during these emergencies, including during auto accidents on New Hampshire, and in general, better coordination of Emergency Management activities

ZONING

- 1) Many single-family homes are creating accessory apartments within them for renting out. Some homes are being divided into apartments. There are also Air BnB rentals.
- 2) Opinion is divided about these developments.
 - * Some people oppose them b/c they are probably violations of county regulations and are also changing the nature of the neighborhood.
 - * However, many people want these apartments for the opportunity to make money, which can help to defray the high costs of owning and maintaining a home.
- 3) The County Council will meet soon to discuss and possibly act to change current regulations restricting this trend of creating rental apartments in single-family homes.
- 4) It should be recognized that population growth means that urbanism is coming and that higher-density housing is probably in Hillandale's future.

SCHOOLS

1) Public schools in Hillandale are ranked low in outside surveys, such as greatschools.org, which rates these schools at 4 on a 10 scale. These low rankings deter some people from moving into Hillandale, which in turn affects home values. If one buys a home in Hillandale, one should not need to send one's children to private schools. (Note: These rankings are based in part on the percentage of college-educated people in community.)

2) Montgomery County has one of the best school systems in the country

* Need to promote a better perception of the schools in the East County, and in particular some of the outstanding programs here.

* Need to put potential home buyers into contact with parents and children of local schools, in order to counter negative publicity.

3) Need to improve early child education, which could even out some of the disadvantages from growing up in a less prosperous neighborhood than others.

BUILDING COMMUNITY SPIRIT

1) Currently, neighbors have pockets of friends here-and-there in Hillandale, but they do not know other people down the street. There is not enough community building. At one time, Hillandale had a Welcoming Committee that welcomed each new family to the neighborhood. In addition, community leaders in Hillandale divided the neighborhood into 13 separate zones, each of which had people tasked with developing community ties in those areas.

2) There is the need for people to get to know their neighbors better, and for there to be a larger sense of community in Hillandale.

* There could be more local gatherings: block parties, movie nights at CHI, more town hall meetings, other?

* There could be meetings between people from Hillandale and residents from adjacent neighborhoods.

* Parents of school-age children have much in common with each other, so it would be helpful if there could be more contact between parents that cut across school boundaries. Schoolchildren might even be included in these activities.

ACTION ITEMS

1) Traffic: Speed bumps on Cresthaven Drive (and Schindler Drive?). If speed bumps are not possible, then respectfully request more police patrols in neighborhood.

2) Emergency Management: Better coordination among county agencies that deal with emergencies of all kinds, including traffic accidents, in order, among other things, to improve traffic flow during emergencies.

3) Community Spirit: Encourage more Hillandale get-togethers. Welcome new residents.

4) Stress the positives of the East County in general and Hillandale in particular.

* Seek help from marketing experts in publicizing the positives of Hillandale.

* Connect potential home buyers with the parents of children in Hillandale schools.

* Improve early child education, to even out disadvantages of lower-income residents.