

Juan:

On Friday night, 25 concerned residents of Cambridge Highlands gathered at the intersection of Griswold and Sunset to discuss the planned traffic calming. We stood in the rain for nearly 90 minutes, and each and every one of us had the chance to voice his/her opinion not only on the proposal, but on specific concerns and observances having lived in the neighborhood during periods ranging from 3 months to 30 plus years. The group was diverse and representative of the residents of the Highlands—those living on both ends of Sunset, Griswold, and Normandy, parents of small children, those with no children, pet owners, etc. We think it is important that you consider our concerns about traffic and safety in the neighborhood as well as our ideas on a practical and viable solution. Without taking into consideration the observances and opinions of those that live here, we do not believe an effective solution can be found.

Concerns of the residents:

The first and primary concern of the group was people speeding in the neighborhood. Of those asked, all 25 people present said they thought we had a speeding problem. Most could not believe the speed limit was 30 mph and thought that this was excessive.

Various residents remarked that they see speeding as a day in-day out problem, and it is regularly observed on both Griswold and Sunset, and driving in both directions.

Everyone present at the meeting agreed that speeding was a problem and that there is a safety issue in the neighborhood that needs to be addressed. Several members of the group cited non-residents cutting through the neighborhood in an effort to “beat the traffic light” at the corner of Brighton and Concord as the problem while others cited neighborhood residents as being regular speeders, particularly on Griswold Street. Many individuals voiced concerns that small children are regularly endangered by speeding vehicles coming through the neighborhood, particularly when combined with the number of parked cars which restrict visibility and make it harder to see children. Another concern was the volume of traffic in the neighborhood. It was observed that there used to be a sign on Brighton St. prohibiting traffic headed toward Concord Ave from turning left onto South Normandy, but that this has been taken down. Finally, it was observed by several members of the group that both the speeding and the congestion problems were being aggravated by the amount of on street parking. Several members of the group observed non neighborhood residents leaving their cars overnight on our streets, or during the day by commuters who catch the bus out on Concord Ave towards Harvard Square.

Reactions to the proposed traffic calming:

All 25 people present agreed that the current proposal was not desirable. Each person present had a comment or opinion on the matter. Various concerns were noted, including the following:

- The proposed solution will do nothing about the high speed of drivers in the neighborhood. Griswold Street traffic would be completely unencumbered and Sunset Road traffic would not have to slow down until they were approaching the intersection.

- The current design will make navigating through the area very difficult and congested, if not dangerous. Two cars would have a very difficult time, side by side, at the intersection of the streets. It has actually been observed that a school bus had to detour down Griswold (as opposed to turning onto Sunset) after dropping off children because it could not fit by a parked truck in front of 5 Sunset. Also, the turning radius has become so narrowed by the barrels that parked cars on both Sunset and Griswold are in danger of being hit. On several occasions, turning cars have been observed stopping and backing up in order to complete the turn from Griswold onto Sunset. In this regard it seems the proposal is making the intersection more dangerous, not less.
- The proposal does not take into consideration the winter months and large amounts of snow that are piled up in front of 8/10 Sunset. Historically, a snow bank several feet high has occupied the entire proposed “green space”. Without the ability to pile snow in this area, both Sunset and Griswold would be significantly narrower, if not impassable, following big snow storms.
- The current design will do little to discourage non-residents from entering the Highlands in an effort to avoid the traffic light at Brighton and Concord.

Proposal of the Residents:

Residents were asked what they thought would be an acceptable and effective solution to the problems. Many ideas were voiced, including stop signs, crosswalks, speed bumps, and restricted access. The proposal below was agreed by all but 3 of the 25 residents present to be the best solution to the safety concern. It should be noted that the proposal of the residents would include all, and not just certain components, of the suggested items:

- ❖ There should be a raised crosswalk running from the west side of Sunset Road to the east side of Griswold Street, crossing through the current bus stop. There should be better signage that it is a bus stop / area of children.
- ❖ Reduce the speed limit in the Highlands to something less than 30 mph.
- ❖ There should be speed bumps (several) along both Griswold Street and Sunset Road on the long stretches in order curb speed as drivers approach the intersection. It was noted by almost all present that signage can always be ignored, but physical barriers to reduce speed was thought by all to be the most effective way to reduce speed along the length of the areas of concern.
- ❖ We should restore the “no left turn” onto South Normandy from Brighton; or, at a minimum, restrict access to South Normandy during peak traffic hours.
- ❖ We should strongly consider 1 or more stop signs at the intersection of Griswold and Sunset in addition to the raised crosswalk.

Additional Comments: About half the members of the group noted that parking by non-residents in the neighborhood was a problem, worsening the safety issues in the neighborhood by making the streets narrower. Several suggested turning the Highlands into a resident only parking area.

Some of the residents also suggested a scaled back version of the intersection change.

While we appreciate that the city is making efforts to make the Highlands a safer place for the residents and our children to live, we do not think the current proposal is the best solution. Rather than simply give you another problem to deal with, we have come together in an effort to provide a consensual solution to the problem. We the residents live in the neighborhood, drive the streets, and observe the safety issues on a daily basis—every day of the week and at all hours, and during all four seasons. We believe that our thoughts and views need to be considered in order to create the safest and most effective solution for the Highlands.

Sincerely,

Residents of the Cambridge Highlands