

HARBORD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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20 July 2015

Ward 20 Councillor Joe Cressy
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West, Suite C50
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Cressy:

We are writing on behalf of residents on the first block of Major Street, between College and Ulster, to request that you take a City recommendation for traffic calming to Community Council for implementation as soon as possible. The request for a solution to speeding traffic on this residential street came originally from a group of residents, and a Transportation proposal for "island parking" has been welcomed by residents in subsequent discussions.

In April 2013 a group of about 20 parents wrote to the Ward 20 Councillor outlining their concerns about speeding traffic on their block of Major Street and asking for traffic-calming measures. The city completed a traffic study in Fall 2014, followed by a Transportation proposal for four groups of three permit-parking spaces on the west side of the street to be added to the permit parking on the east side between April 1 and November 30 of each year. Because of staff changes in the Councillor's office, news of this proposal was released to the original group of petitioners only in April 2015. After some online discussion, the Harbord Village Residents' Association distributed a diagram and explanatory text to all residences on the block, and held a block meeting on June 15 to discuss the proposal.

At this meeting, where city staff members presented the plan and the reasoning behind it, the proposal received unanimous approval from the 11 residents in attendance, with approval also expressed by several who could not attend. Discussion at that meeting led to a slight change in proposed positioning of the parking "islands." HVRA subsequently distributed a revised diagram and explanation of the proposal to all residences on the block, with an invitation to send further comments and questions to the Councillor's office. We have also created a webpage giving full information about the proposal (www.harbordvillage.com/majortraffic).

Harbord Village is a residential neighbourhood of one-way streets and traffic splits, a system created to deter drivers cutting through between main streets. As one of the longest blocks in the area, Major Street currently offers an unobstructed view northward from College, which invites drivers to gather speed up to the stop sign at the intersection with Ulster. Parents express dismay at the danger posed to their young children, including those walking to Lord Lansdowne School on the next block, by drivers intent on getting through the traffic maze as quickly as possible.

The many elderly residents of the two Kensington Gardens longterm care residences on the block are also at risk when they use walkers or are pushed in wheelchairs. Harbord Village, with a large population of retired people and university students, is proud of its high "walkability" scores, but Major is not a pedestrian-friendly street.

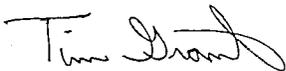
Residents considered a variety of traffic-calming measures in the long period of discussion leading to the June 2015 meeting. They now recognize that speed bumps, for instance, are unacceptable to EMS, and that other measures such as large pinchpoints like the one on Robert at Russell (the neighbouring block) would require much greater expense. Though island parking was not the original request, residents are reassured by the clear data about reduction of speed and volume of vehicles from studies of a similar plan on nearby Barton Avenue.

One of the participants in the June 15 residents' meeting summarizes the practical advantages of the proposed plan as follows:

1. Island parking will radically reduce driving speeds, as drivers will have to pay attention to their positions. We are aware that the severity of traffic accidents drops dramatically with reductions in speed.
2. Enforcement officers cannot be expected to be present all the time, but the parked cars will act as continuous enforcement of the need to drive slowly.
3. Because drivers need to drive more carefully, they are far less likely to be distracted and to jump the curb on the west side. If they do, it will happen at a much slower speed.
4. Volume will also go down as drivers realize that Major Street does not allow them to race.
5. Pedestrians will not experience blind spots for crossing the road because they can easily walk around the four-car "islands."
6. For eight months of the year, there will be 12 more parking spots for permit holders, reducing the frustration felt now when they cannot find parking spots on their home block.
7. In the winter months the snowbanks act as a traffic calmer and the speeding problem disappears. The absence of parking islands will make snow clearance easier.
8. The solution is inexpensive and can be revisited at any time.

Given the long period of concern and discussion, HVRA is hopeful that Community Council will recognize the value and practicality of the proposal, and will vote to have it implemented by Spring 2016. We look forward to hearing about the success of this citizens' initiative.

Sincerely,



Tim Grant, Chair, Harbord Village Residents' Association



Margaret Procter, South-Central Representative, Harbord Village Residents' Association