

A SPECIAL “TRAFFIC SAFETY” REPORT

By

Councilmember & Candidate for Mayor

JASBINDER SINGH

Pertaining To

SPRING STREET

&

The Intersections

@

PARK & MONROE

GRANT & FILLMORE

JEFF RYAN & BAYSHIRE

HERNDON PKWY & MONROE

(dated 9-19-22)

INTRODUCTION

This report consists of essentially two parts. The first part discusses the Spring Street accident that took place about 3 weeks ago. The driver of a car traveling south, presumably above the limit of 25 mile per hour, had lost control of the car, crossed the adjacent side walk and ended up in the front yards of the homes located at 633 and 631 Spring Street. The consequences could have been disastrous, but fortunately were not. The accident shook the entire neighborhood and, it seems, lost a sense of security that had been a mainstay over the years.

The Spring Street part of the report has been prompted by the responses of the Town Manager and the councilmembers during the September 13th public session. Among other things, there were discussions about the increased traffic, the cut through traffic, the 85th percentile speed on this road, the “minimum viable product” and other topics that have nothing what-so-ever to do with safe travel on this and other streets. As discussed in the report, the accident most likely took place because of (1) specific characteristics of this road, & (2) the violation of the speed limit by the driver.¹

This report has also been prompted by past complaints of either accidents or unsafe road conditions and by the lack of adequate response by the Town at the following intersections:

- Park Ave and Monroe Street
- Grant & Filmore Streets
- Jeff Ryan & Bayshire Lane, and
- Herndon Parkway & Monroe Street

The Spring Street incident has given us an opportunity to present the problems and possible solutions at all of the locations and to help prompt our citizens to communicate with the town government in a meaningful manner.

The report concludes that the Town can take rather simple, inexpensive and timely steps (like installing appropriate signs) to mitigate the dangers of accidents at these locations.

¹ Some claim that the accident took place because the driver was distracted.

SPRING STREET

From the traffic and public safety point of view, Spring Street suffers from three main issues (see the attached figure for reference). I have reached this conclusion after making several passes of Spring Street from Locust Street to Van Buren Street and vice versa. I traveled at different speeds in my personal car, Kia Soul.

1. Inability of Drivers to React to Changes in the Slope and Direction of the Road

About half way between point A and point B, the road begins to rise rapidly and peaks at point B. It also turns somewhat sharply near point B. Consequently, while traveling from Locust, I could not see the road surface on the other side of point B until I had crossed Bicksler Drive. At that point, I had enough sight distance to safely navigate the curve in the road while traveling at 25 mph.

I found it difficult to do so, while traveling at 35 mph. It is reasonable to assume that if I had been impaired in some manner, my reaction to the change in slope and direction would have been much slower and I would have been in substantial danger of losing control of my car.

I believe this is how the latest accident took place. The driver in that case was probably traveling at a speed higher than 35mph and was probably impaired or distracted in some manner. He lost control of his vehicle at the turn and ended up in the front yard of the home located at 631 Spring Street.

Based on my trial runs on Spring Street from Locust to Van Buren, I have reasonably concluded that:

- a. this danger cannot be mitigated even if the Town posts a sign (between A & B) that warns drivers of the change in direction and/or the slope of the road at B,
- b. the only solution is to compel drivers to come to a full stop before reaching point B, and
- c. the best place to **post a STOP sign is at Bicksler Lane**

A similar (but, not as bad) situation exists, if a driver is traveling from Point E to Point A). The road rises upward between E & D and the driver cannot easily gauge the change in the direction of the road at D until he/she has reached the end of the second to last house in the E-D block (610 Spring Street) or the middle of the next house that borders Nash & Spring Streets. Once again, even though there is a greater sight distance at this location, if a driver is traveling at more than 35 miles per hour, he/she is likely to find it difficult to navigate the curve D (Nash Street). In 2012, a BMW struck the electric pole located at the northeast corner of Nash and Spring Streets. Therefore, in this case also, it is appropriate to post a Stop sign at this location.

2. Difficulty of Crossing Spring Street

Both STOP signs should permit the residents of adjacent neighborhoods to cross Spring Street safely.

3. 25 mph is The Safe Speed on Spring Street:

I tested the ease with which I could drive on Spring Street. I drove at 25 mph with great confidence and felt that I was in control of the vehicle. In contrast, when I drove at 35 mph, I felt that I had substantially less control of my car and that I needed to slow down. The changes in slope and direction of the street discussed above as well as dissimilar conditions of the road surface at different locations contributed to the sense of increased danger.

4. THE REMEDY

- Install a STOP Sign @ Bicksler Lane
- Install a STOP Sign @ NASH Street

SPRING STREET



PARK & MONROE

Back in 2014 (?), the Town rebuilt the intersection at Park Ave and Monroe Street. It was a problematic location due to the rather unusual manner in which the two roads meet & exit at this location. First, Park Ave coming from Dranesville takes a 140 degree turn at the intersection. Second, the western part of Monroe Street, shifts downward by about 25 ft at the intersection.

These configurations have restricted the speed of vehicles through this intersection. As the attached Figure shows:

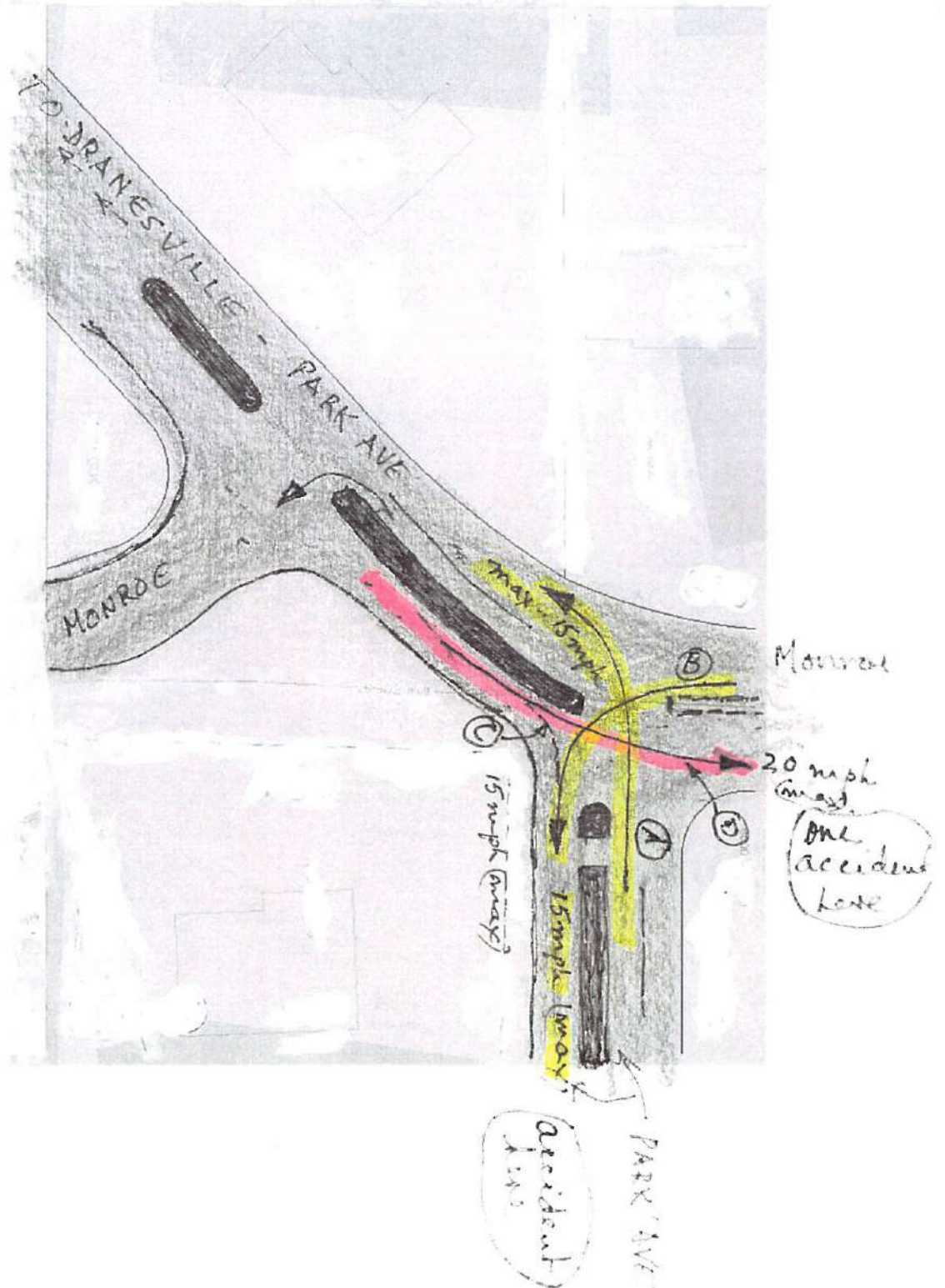
- Vehicles coming from Dranesville and turning on to Park Ave can make the 140 degree turn at a speed of about 15 mph.
- Vehicles coming from Elden Street (on Monroe) and turning south on to Park Ave can also make the 90 degree turn, at best, at 15 mph, and
- Vehicles coming from Dranesville and continuing on to Monroe can make the necessary turn, at best, at 20 mph.

Since the reconstruction in 2014, two “accidents” have taken place. In one case, a vehicle coming from Dranesville and continuing on to Monroe, crashed through the fence of the first house on Park Ave and ended up in its side yard. In the second case, a vehicle coming from Elden Street made a 90 degree turn on to Park Ave at a speed much higher than the safe speed of 15 mph. It bumped into the curb in several places before the driver could control the vehicle.

The Remedy: Currently, only one sign near the intersection suggests that the speed limit is 25 mph, which is the speed limit on the roads approaching the intersection. There is no sign, at or just before the intersection that advises drivers to drive through the intersection at 15mph or less.

The Town should post signs (on the three road segments that come into the intersection) **that contain diagrams of the intersection and advise that the safe speed through the intersection is 15mph.**

PARK & MONROE



GRANT & FILLMORE

During the last year several major accidents have taken place at this intersection. The owner of the home at the northwest lot has witnessed three of them this year including one in which the car coming traveling fast on Grant **flipped over** the car traveling on Fillmore.

The accidents have un-nerved residents living on Grant, Fillmore and Van Buren. Those living around this intersection are afraid that, sometimes in the near future, a car might end up in their front or side yards, harm their children, gardens or other property. The residents also worried about their children who travel to and from the nearby elementary school and cross this intersection every day.

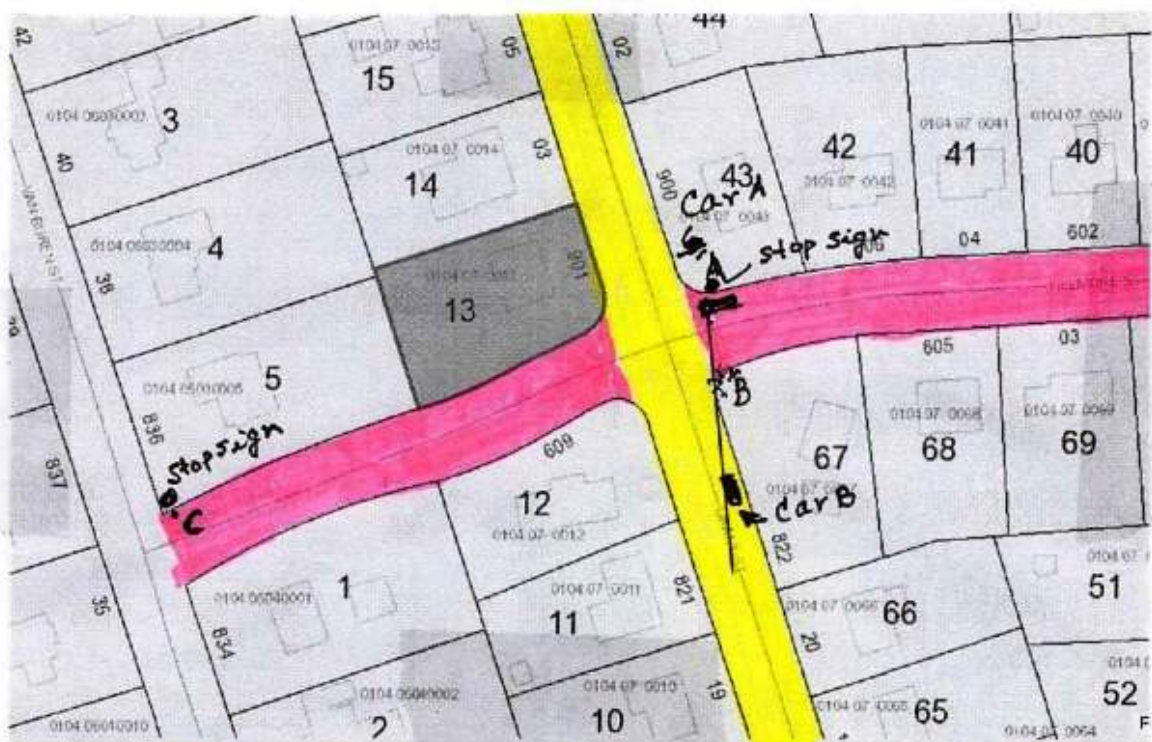
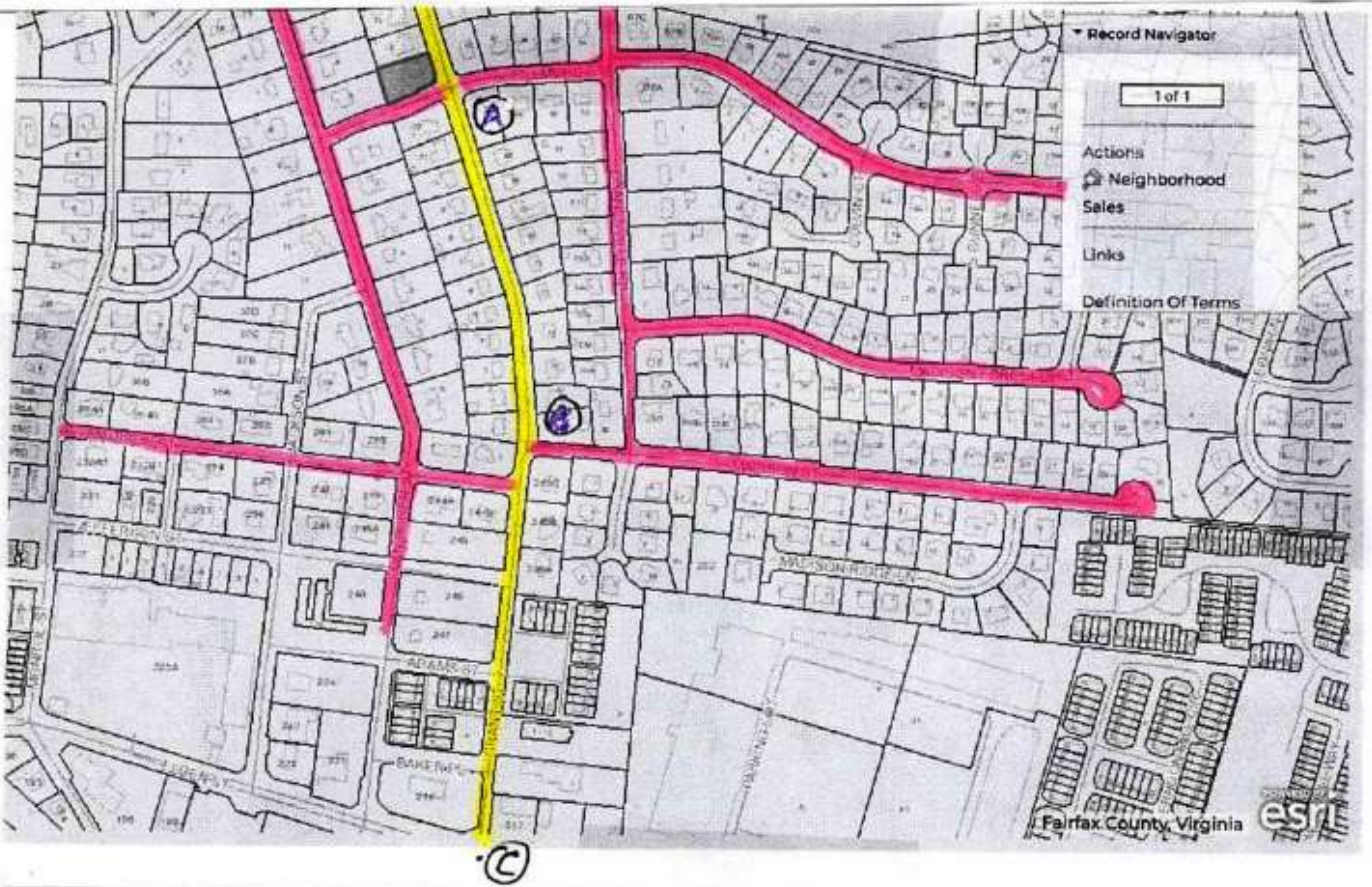
There appear to be two main reasons for such accidents:

1. **Extremely Short Sight Distances:** A car that has stopped at the Stop Sign on Fillmore (Car A) cannot see the Car B until it has reached within 100 ft of the intersection. Similarly, Car B cannot see Car A unless it has reached within an uncomfortably short distance. The probability of more accidents is high under the current circumstances.
2. **Excessive Speeds:** Some cars traveling on Grant Street, especially those coming from the Elden Street side, travel at excessively high speeds. Some have claimed such cars are driven by those who are employed in Food Delivery business located on Elden Street; however there probably are many reasons for

Remedies: It to make sure that business or other vehicles do not travel through our streets at high speeds. There are several steps the town can take to address this issue at this and other locations. These include:

- a. **Install Stop Signs on Grant Street:** Some consider this a top priority. They want all vehicles traveling on Grant will have to stop at this intersection.
- b. **Work with businesses to ensure that their delivery employees are trained properly and that employers are accountable**
- c. **Install cameras at the intersection and Paint Cross Walks for school children**

GRANT & FILLMORE

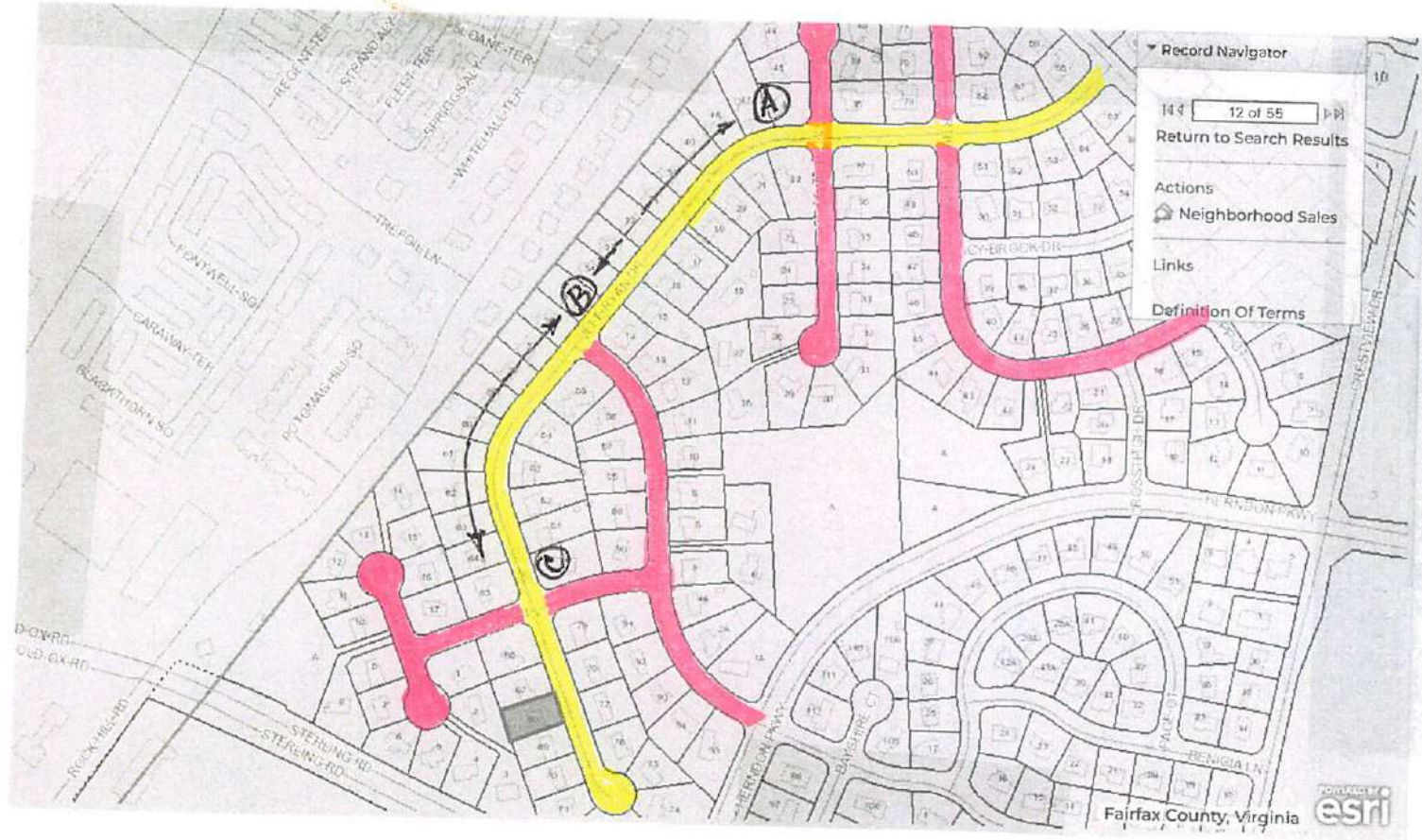


JEFF RYAN DRIVE

The slope of Jeff Ryan road begins to increase at Cuttermill Court, first slowly and then rapidly. A car traveling at 10 mph near Cuttermill (Point A on the accompanying chart) can attain a speed of about 35-40 miles per hour by the time it reaches Point B Bayshire Lane and about 50 miles per hour when it reaches Point C, even when the driver takes his foot off the pedal.

Residents of the area and visitors park along this stretch of the road every day. Drivers traveling half way between Point A and Point B often cannot see anyone standing, sitting or playing in front of or near the cars. There is an ever-present danger of someone stepping into the travel lane. Further, residents who live half way between Point B and Point C (considered the high-speed area) in recent years have complained loudly about the danger of accidents. They often fear for their lives and for potential damage to their property. In spite of complaints since at least 2016 (when I did a study of the intersection at Bayshire), the town has stifled their requests for a STOP sign at Bayshire. Why, some of the residents ask? **So, little cost and so much resistance.**

The town has exhibited such behavior at other locations as well. For example, it took more than 2 years for the town to agree to install a stop sign at Monroe and 3rd Street after a driver lost control of his car, crossed Monroe and broke through the fence of the house located at the southeast corner of the intersection.



JEFF RYAN DR.

HERNDON PKWY & MONROE

The slope of the Herndon Parkway begins to increase rapidly at the Herndon Cemetery. Vehicles traveling west usually pick up speed as they cross Grant Street and can reach peak speeds of 40 or 50 miles an hour by the time they arrive at the Monroe Street intersection.

Some residents who live north of the intersection and use the swimming pool located on Monroe have complained that some cars traveling on Herndon Pkwy do not stop when the traffic light turns red. They are particularly concerned about the safety of their children.

REMEDIES – Running the red light is tempting in certain circumstances but can be very dangerous. The Town should investigate the possibility of installing cameras at this location or otherwise explore alternatives.

