

**Culbreth Ridge Homeowners Association**

**To:** Mayor & Town Council for Chapel Hill

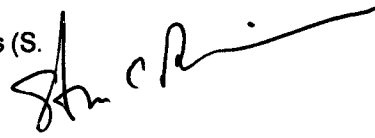
**From:** Culbreth Ridge Homeowners Association Members and Board of Directors (S. Broscius presenting)

**CC:** Cal Horton, Town Manager for Chapel Hill  
 Kurnar Neppali, Traffic Engineer for the Town of Chapel Hill  
 Joyce Smith, Clerk for the Town of Chapel Hill  
 CRHA Residents

**Date:** 2/26/2002

**Re:** Request to Petition the Mayor and Town Council at the March 4, 2002 Council Meeting

**Attachment:** Culbreth Ridge Homeowners Association Petition to the Chapel Hill Mayor & Town Council for Closure of Highgrove Road



The Culbreth Ridge Homeowners Assoc. (CHRA) respectfully requests the attached petition be:

1. Placed into record with the Town of Chapel Hill by Joyce Smith, Town Clerk
2. Added as an agenda item to petition and address the Town Council at their March 4, 2002 meeting at 7 PM.
3. Copied and distributed to the Mayor, Council and Town Manager for review prior to the March 4, 2002 meeting

Please notify Steven Broscius (547-2621 Office; 932-5246 Office) if any of these requests cannot be accommodated.

## **Culbreth Ridge Homeowners Association Petition to the Chapel Hill Mayor & Town Council for Closure of Highgrove Road**

### **Request:**

The Culbreth Ridge Homeowners Association (CRHA) respectfully petitions the Mayor and Town Council of Chapel Hill to approve and immediately initiate the actions needed to close Highgrove Road at the juncture between Culbreth Ridge and Southern Village developments to all traffic except emergency vehicles.

CRHA makes this request via its Board of Directors based on written majority signature vote of the CRHA residents and does so after careful consideration and extensive discussions with Kumar Nepalli, Traffic Engineer for Chapel Hill. CRHA also would like to actively discuss this proposal with the Town as they evaluate it and develop a response.

This petition is made only after unsuccessfully trying several other means (additional stop signs and requests for police enforcement) to reduce the significant danger of a major traffic accident that exists in the Culbreth Ridge development.

The Town of Chapel Hill has an obligation to remedy unsafe living conditions for children and all residents that exist due to wanton disregard for the traffic regulations and laws. **If nothing is done to change our current traffic situation, eventually a child or an adult will end up injured or killed as a result of the danger that exists. With dozens of Grey Culbreth Middle School student pedestrians using Gardner Circle during the heaviest automobile traffic times, this danger extends to the children from adjacent neighborhoods and is not limited to residents of Culbreth Ridge.**

Via the discussion below, CRHA will show that closure of Highgrove road does not preclude or significantly inconvenience the residents/visitors of Southern Village from being able to get to the locations they now speed through Culbreth Ridge to reach. Closure would have the positive effect of dramatically decreasing the level of danger that currently exists for children, adults and drivers on Gardner Circle and Highgrove Road (hereafter Gardner/Highgrove) in Culbreth Ridge development.

### **Reason for Request:**

Extreme danger in the form of potential pedestrian injury/fatalities and vehicular collisions occur daily on Gardner Circle and Highgrove Road. The extreme danger to health and safety threatens the:

- ◆ Children and adult residents of Culbreth Ridge during daily outside activities. There are 40+ children living in Culbreth Ridge and they all deserve a safe environment to grow and play in.
- ◆ Dozens of children passing through Culbreth Ridge development as they walk to and from attending Grey Culbreth Middle School and their year-round use of the school's athletic facilities. These include children from Cobble Ridge, Kent Woodlands and Southern Village developments that surround Culbreth Ridge. See Attachment I illustrating the walkway from Culbreth Ridge to Grey Culbreth Middle School.
- ◆ Drivers and passengers in the >1500 cars/day which use Gardner Circle and Highgrove Road as an exit and entrance to Southern Village.

### **A life-threatening situation exists every day because:**

1. Previous traffic surveys conducted by the town of Chapel Hill on Gardner/Highgrove conservatively indicate that **at least 14.2 % of the residents/visitors of Southern Village exceed the speed limit** when travelling on these roads in Culbreth Ridge (See Attachment II – Culbreth Ridge Traffic Census Summary). Traffic citation records of police surveillance during the two weeks starting Feb 18, 2002 will document that they frequently fail to stop at the stop signs. Please have your staff obtain the citation records for this period and talk with the traffic police before you formulate a response to our petition. Drivers going to and coming from Southern Village via Gardner/Highgrove show a complete disregard for traffic laws and safety of their fellow human beings.



(B)

2. Gardner/Highgrove was **not designed as a high volume collection road** like the other access points to Southern Village. Gardner Circle is a continuously blind curve that makes visibility of oncoming traffic and pedestrians impossible. This is further exacerbated at speeds of  $\geq 25$  MPH. Gardner Circle is also steeply inclined which encourages drivers to unconsciously accelerate down the hill and reach speeds well above the posted 25 MPH speed limit.
3. Driver behavior has not changed at all after 2 additional sets of stop signs were installed on Gardner/Highgrove as recommended by Kumar Nepalli, Traffic Engineer for Chapel Hill in his Oct 17, 2001 letter to CRHA. Drivers routinely do not stop at these signs. Again, review of the police citation records for the two weeks beginning Feb 18, 2002 will validate this claim.
4. Cobble Ridge, the development adjacent to Culbreth Ridge, was successful in petitioning the Town of Chapel Hill to close off their connection to the intersection of Highgrove/Gardner for fear of the traffic load and subsequent safety issues (See Attachment I – Map of Culbreth Ridge Development). Consequently, the entire volume of traffic exiting Southern Village and the related dangers it carries has to be borne by Culbreth Ridge development. The decision to close the connection has not provided for equitable treatment of the residents of the two developments.
5. Several requests additional police enforcement of speed limits and stop signs have resulted in sparse police surveillance until the week of Feb 18, 2002. At that time, Lt. Pressley's officers began conducting a more intensive surveillance effort and many tickets were issued for failure to stop at stop signs. While writing these tickets, the officers have also reported they could not stop and ticket numerous other drivers who also failed to stop. While CRHA appreciates the police efforts, we believe the effectiveness of any such enforcement measures will only slightly longer than the period the diligent enforcement is maintained. **Given the low priority that traffic surveillance has for the police (personal communication with Lt. Tim Pressley), this is not a viable solution to our dangerous situation.**
6. Additional homes are being built and occupied in Southern Village. As their population of children matures to driving age, the volumes of traffic that use Gardner/Highgrove will surely increase, not begin to obey traffic laws without coercion and thereby create even greater likelihood that injury or fatality will occur in Culbreth Ridge.

## **Relevant Facts and Considerations:**

### **I. Traffic Survey Results and Traffic Calming Recommendations**

Several surveys for traffic speed and volume have been conducted in Culbreth Ridge to assess the needs for traffic calming. **CRHA questions the survey validity and subsequent October 17, 2001 recommendation letter from the Traffic Engineer.** That recommendation states that traffic calming tactics (speed humps, tables, etc.) and/or closure of Highgrove was not warranted based on the survey results. CRHA feels that **the surveys significantly understate the actual danger and the speed/volume of traffic.** More accurate assessments/surveys require:

- ◆ Non-invasive speed measurements such as radar - people slow down when they see the recording device tubes currently used which underestimates actual speed and danger
- ◆ Extended sampling periods - weeks not days
- ◆ Concomitant measurements for the other 2 access roads to Southern Village to show the relative volumes using Gardner/Highgrove
- ◆ Subjective visual evaluations to assess the impact of the blind curve, steep elevation changes on Gardner Circle and the child pedestrian activity relative to Grey Culbreth Middle School

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However, if we assume the previous surveys are conservative estimates of the volume and speed, they have value to illustrate the need for traffic calming to reduce danger. Two key points come out of that survey data.

1. **Between 14.2 and 18% of the volume travelling Gardner/Highgrove is exceeding the speed limit.**  
This translates to 160 to 260 cars/day which could cause an accident on the blind curve of Gardner circle.
2. About 22% of the total daily traffic volume occurs during the 2 peak hours of traffic flow. During that 2 hours, **a car exceeding the 25 MPH speed limit is observed every 2.5 minutes.**

A more detailed summary of the previous survey results is found in Attachment II – Culbreth Ridge Traffic Census Summary.

**II. Need for Neighborhood Interconnectivity and Emergency Vehicle Access.**

Neighborhood connectivity is fostered for a purpose and does have value. However, closure of Highgrove Road will not reduce connectivity for the residents of Southern Village. They still will maintain two other access roads to their community from Highway 15/501. One of these roads (Arlen Park Drive) is directly across the street from the local fire station that provides fire and medical emergency assistance (refer to the map in Attachment III).

Many Southern Village drivers now use Gardner/Highgrove as a “short-cut” to get to or come from Carrboro. Closure of Highgrove does not stop these drivers from getting between these two locations. They simply need to take one of the other two exits from S. Village onto Highway 15/501 and turn then left onto Culbreth Road. Both 15/501 and Culbreth are non-residential, limited access and higher speed roads suited to the high volumes that come through Culbreth Ridge development (refer to the map in Attachment III).

**Consistent failure to obey the traffic laws and total neglect for the safety of their fellow human beings (neighbors, in fact), should be strongly considered as the council weighs Southern Village’s so called rights to have a convenient “cut-through” to get to and from Carrboro (a.k.a. “interconnectivity”)**

**Inconvenience to Southern Village residents cannot outweigh the right for a safe environment for all who live or pass through Culbreth Ridge development.**

With only 36 homes in the Culbreth Ridge development, traffic volumes after closure of Highgrove would be sufficiently low that the single access road at Weyer Drive would be more than adequate. In cases of emergency, access via Highgrove could be temporarily opened or the currently blocked connection of Gardner Circle and Cobble Ridge Drive could be opened.

**III. Precedents for Road Closure Currently Exist in Culbreth Ridge Development**

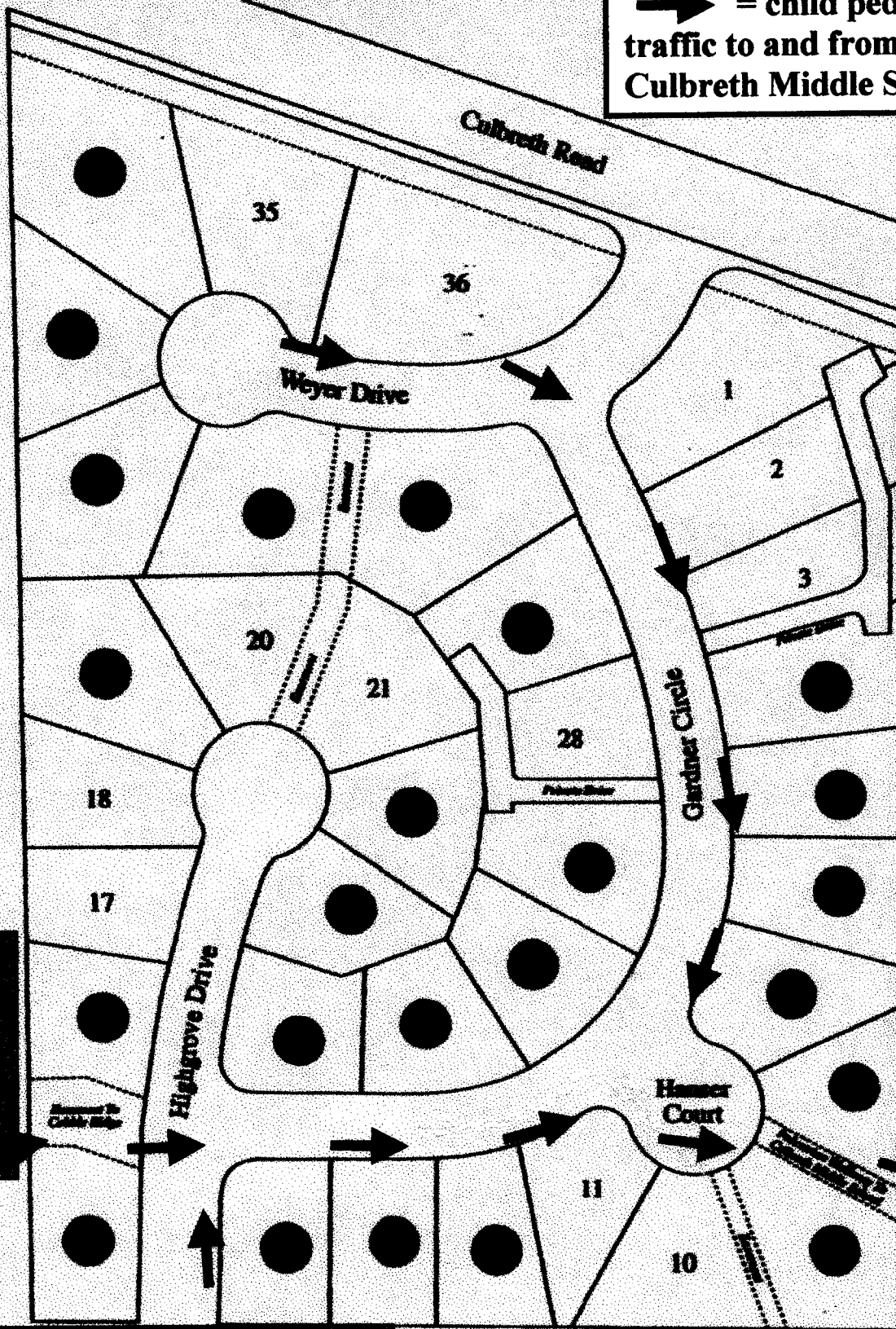
Currently, the connection of Gardner Circle (at its intersection with Highgrove Road) into Cobble Ridge Road in Cobble Ridge development is closed in a manner similar to what we propose for closure of Highgrove Road at the juncture of Southern Village and Culbreth developments. At some point in time, the residents lobbied successfully to the Town Council of Chapel Hill to close this road in spite of it being approved as part of the original development plan for Culbreth Ridge and in spite of all the arguments that have been made for the value of neighborhood interconnectivity.

CRHA does not know all of the arguments that were used to achieve the closure of the connection between Cobble Ridge and Culbreth Ridge. However, we believe that a fair and consistent policy should be followed in making such decisions. We have shown via the arguments laid out in this document that closure of Highgrove road does not preclude or significantly inconvenience the residents/visitors of Southern Village from being able to get to the locations they now speed through Culbreth Ridge to reach. It also would dramatically decrease the level of danger that currently exists for children, adults and drivers on Highgrove/Gardner.

**Attachment I – Map of  
Culbreth Ridge Development**

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**➔ = child pedestrian  
traffic to and from Grey  
Culbreth Middle School**



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# Attachment II - Culbreth Ridge Traffic Census Summary

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## All Culbreth Ridge Traffic Surveys Conducted by Town of Chapel Hill

### Key Take-away Points:

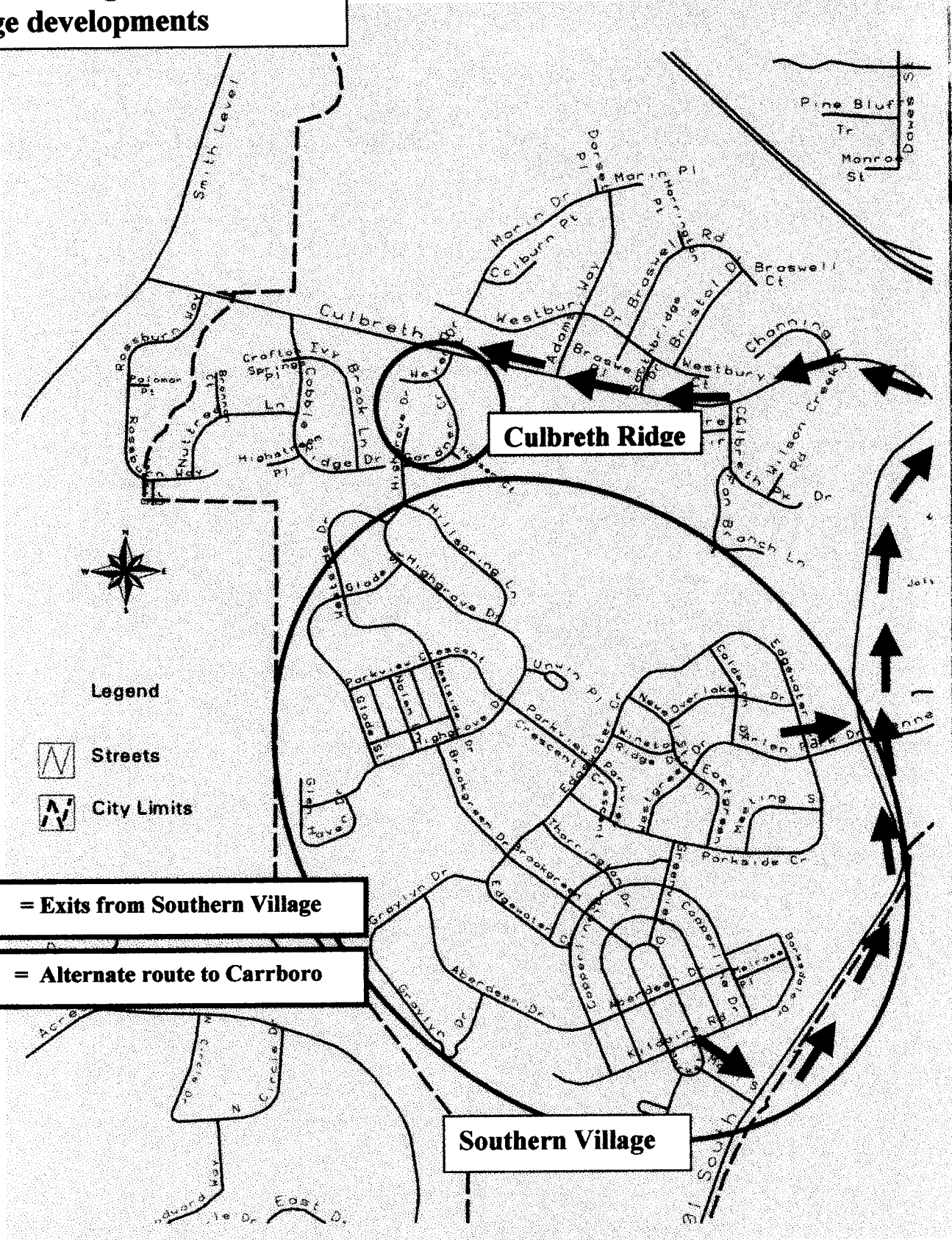
1. Between 14.2 and 18% of the volume travelling Gardner/Highgrove is exceeding the speed limit = 202 to 256 cars/day.
2. During the 2 peak hours of traffic flow, a car exceeding the 25 MPH speed limit is observed every 2.5 minutes.
3. Gardner/Highgrove were not designed as high volume collection points like other Southern Village access points. They very dangerous because they are narrow, have several blind curves and are steeply inclined.
4. Accidents and near-misses occur regularly and will continue to occur unless traffic calming measures are implemented. Routine child pedestrian traffic to & from Culbreth Middle School is at extreme risk unless something is done.

Survey/Census		Entire 24 hr day			Peak 2 hours each day					Peak 2 hr volume as % of 24 hr total
		Total Volume	> 25 MPH		Total Volume	> 25 MPH		# of cars/min	Minutes between cars >25 MPH	
Date	Location		Volume	% of Total		Volume	% of Total			
9-Oct	302 Highgrove	1284	131	10.2%	279	37	13.3%	2.3	3.2	22%
9-Oct	207 Highgrove	1424	46	3.2%	316	11	3.5%	2.6	10.9	22%
9-Oct	203 Gardner	1571	163	10.4%	335	38	11.3%	2.8	3.2	21%
9-Oct	102 Gardner	1624	249	15.3%	338	50	14.8%	2.8	2.4	21%
12-Sep	302 Highgrove	1228	129	10.5%	268	23	8.6%	2.2	5.2	22%
12-Sep	205 Gardner	1455	40	2.7%	318	12	3.8%	2.7	10.0	22%
13-Sep	302 Highgrove	1293	134	10.4%	270	29	10.7%	2.3	4.1	21%
13-Sep	Gardner @ Hanser	1507	727	48.2%	317	152	47.9%	2.6	0.8	21%
<b>Average all data =</b>		<b>1423</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Average all data excluding outliers Oct 9 - 207 Highgrove &amp; Sep 12 - 205 Gardner</b>		<b>1418</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>21%</b>

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**Attachment III – Map of  
Culbreth Ridge & Southern  
Village developments**

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Submitted 2-26-02  
By Steven C. Broscius  
CRHA Board Member

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