



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS**  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

# **APPENDIX C**

## **Correspondence**

# **Request to the Planning Board by Parkwood Residents to Open Beach Drive to Vehicles on Fridays**

Submitted on behalf of the residents of the Parkwood community

Kira Lueders, President

Jeffrey Griffith, Vice President

Parkwood Residents Association

## **Summary**

The section of Beach Drive from Cedar Lane to Knowles Avenue has been closed to vehicles on Saturdays and Sundays since the Covid pandemic. This was a positive decision by the Parks Department because it allowed the road to become a center of informal gatherings and community recreation on weekends. However, a year ago this section was also closed on Fridays, unfortunately with negative effects. There has been relatively low use of the road by bikers, runners, and walkers on that day, yet the hundreds of people going to work, dropping off children at school, or returning home must find alternative and usually more congested routes. The impact on the daily lives of many has been disruptive and has caused an increased concern over safety. Based on an overwhelming vote by residents in opposition to closure, the community of Parkwood requests that Beach Drive be reopened to vehicles on Fridays while maintaining closure on Saturdays and Sundays.

## **Introduction**

In June 2024 the Montgomery County Planning Board voted to close Beach Drive to traffic on Fridays from Cedar Lane to Knowles Avenue. Because of the strong opposition to this closure by the residents of the Parkwood community who live immediately adjacent to Beach Drive, the Board agreed to review this decision in a year. Parkwood residents have now experienced the impact of the closure for almost 12 months and continue to urge that it be reopened to vehicles on Fridays as it was post Covid.

It is important to note, however, that Parkwood residents fully support closure of Beach Drive on Saturdays and Sundays. Furthermore, we want to thank Kyle Lukacs, a Parks Trail Planner, for working with our community on these issues as we all search for a balanced solution that supports recreation without sacrificing public safety.

## **Background and Context**

The decision to close Beach Drive from Cedar Lane to Knowles Avenue on Fridays was taken at the same time the Board decided to reopen Beach Drive to vehicles at all times from Connecticut Avenue to Cedar Lane. This decision was based at least in part on the fact that the volume of cut-through traffic onto Culver Street in the Byforde-Rock Creek Highlands community on weekends posed a significant safety issue. Although it did not affect them directly, Parkwood Residents supported this decision.

Parkwood residents want Beach Drive to remain closed to vehicles on weekends and holidays from Cedar Lane to Knowles Avenue. Closure on Saturdays and Sundays has enabled Beach Drive to become a center for community life in many ways. Families and friends walk together on a road free of cars, children learn to ride their bicycles, runners have an additional route to take, and adult bikers can travel in large groups safely for the 2+ miles that Beach Drive is closed.

***Photos of Beach Drive between Cedar Lane and Knowles Avenue on Sunday morning, May 20, 2025***



But this is not the case on Fridays. Parents are more often at work, children are in school, and the use of Beach Drive is significantly reduced. As described below, Beach Drive is heavily used by vehicles during rush hours on normal work days, crossing east <--> west in both directions and also going into and out of Parkwood. During these same hours on Fridays, Beach Drive itself is relatively little used by bikers, runners, and walkers compared to the normal vehicle traffic that would otherwise use the road.

This request to the Planning Board 1) documents and compares the use of Beach Drive when it is open to vehicles and when it is closed 2) reports the results of a survey of Parkwood residents regarding the closure of Beach Drive on Fridays 3) summarizes the

reasons that residents gave to support their votes and 4) discusses the safety issues that concern many residents when Beach Drive is closed on Fridays.

### **Use of Beach Drive on Fridays**

To compare the use of Beach Drive when it was open and closed to traffic, data was collected by personal observation at the intersection of Beach Drive and Franklin Street. This intersection is 0.6 miles from Cedar Lane and 1.4 miles from Knowles Avenue. The methodology and data analysis are reported in detail in this accompanying linked document, [\*Report on the Use of Beach Drive Mondays-Fridays\*](#).

Briefly summarized, the number of vehicles and the number of bikers/runners/walkers were recorded on data sheets, which were retained for future inspection and verification. Data collected included:

1. Average number of vehicles per hour using Beach Drive during two morning and two late-afternoon rush hours on two different days.
2. Average number of bikers, walkers and runners using Beach Drive and Rock Creek Trail on two different Fridays.

### **Results: Use of Beach Drive when open to vehicles compared to when it is closed on Fridays**

1. There is a substantial difference in the total number of vehicles using Beach Drive per hour monitored when it is open compared to the total number of bikers, runners and walkers when it is closed. The numbers below show average use per hour.
  - a. Morning rush hour: 249 vehicles compared to 44 bikers, runners, and walkers: Ratio=6:1
  - b. Afternoon rush hour: 358 vehicles compared to 87 bikers, runners, and walkers: Ratio 4:1
2. On Fridays when Beach Drive is closed:
  - a. During a morning rush hour, an average of 249 drivers must find alternative routes that are less efficient and usually more congested.
  - b. During two afternoon rush hours, 350+ vehicles per hour must find alternative routes that are less efficient and usually more congested
3. There is a significant difference in the number of vehicles per rush hour going into or out of Parkwood compared to the number of vehicles going east or west without entering or exiting Parkwood. Since Beach is the one of the shortest and most efficient ways to enter or exit Parkwood, these cars presumably spend more time transiting through Parkwood by other routes on Fridays.
  - a. Morning rush hour: 180 vehicles enter or exit Parkwood compared to 70 vehicles going continuously along Beach Drive.
  - b. Afternoon rush hours: 225 vehicles enter or exit Parkwood compared to 134 vehicles going continuously along Beach Drive.
4. On Fridays in the afternoon, bikers represent 79% of the users of Beach Drive.

### **Routes taken by bikers.**

In a separate effort, data was collected on the routes taken by bikers when they entered or exited Beach Drive at the intersection of Cedar Lane and Beach Drive. A single observer monitored and recorded the number of bikers taking specific routes.

Over half of the bikers [54%] entered or exited the section of Beach Drive that was closed to vehicles, coming from or continuing onto a section of Beach that was open to vehicles. This indicates that while the closed portion of Beach Drive [2+ miles] is undoubtedly a safer section of the road, **bikers are not deterred from cycling on other sections of Beach Drive even when they have to share the road with vehicles as they continue their ride.**

### **Assessment based on comparative use of Beach Drive**

We must ask who benefits from the closure of Beach Drive to vehicles on Fridays. It is not the average of almost 250 drivers/hour who must seek other and longer routes compared to the average of 44 bikers/runners/walkers in the morning, nor the average of 350+ drivers/hour similarly diverted compared to the average of 87 bikers/runners/walkers in the afternoon.

Granted it is easier for bikers, especially those travelling in groups, to ride on the road. But over half of the riders come from or continue to ride on sections of Beach that have traffic. Is it worth closing Beach for the 2+ mile segment that can be travelled by most bikers in less than 10 minutes?

In addition, it is important to remember that even when Beach Drive is little used on Fridays by bikers, runners, and walkers because of rain, summer heat, and winter cold, it is still closed to residents who must get to work, regardless of the weather. It is possible that inclement and inhospitable weather significantly limits the use of Beach Drive on Fridays for at least half the year or more. Yet drivers are still prohibited from using it.

Finally, it is worth noting that Rock Creek Trail is ALWAYS open to bikers, runners, and walkers. Even when Beach Drive is closed to vehicles, many bikers, runners, and walkers use the trail.

### **Opinions of Parkwood Residents**

To obtain the opinions of Parkwood Residents regarding the closure of Beach Drive on Fridays and to understand its impact on them, a survey was conducted from May 4, 2025-May 14, 2025. Residents were asked to give their name, address, and email address and to respond to a single question: Did they want Beach Drive to be open to vehicles or closed to vehicles on Friday. Respondents also had the option of stating the reasons for their vote.

## Results of the survey

- 447 residents responded to the poll.
- 354 residents [79%] voted to have Beach Drive open to vehicles on Fridays.
- 93 residents [21%] voted to have Beach Drive closed to vehicles on Fridays.

**These results clearly indicate that the vast majority of residents – 79%- want Beach Drive open to vehicles on Friday.**

## Impact on Residents: Reasons for their votes

377 of the 447 respondents [84%] gave reasons for their vote.

Below is a summary of the main concerns raised by residents, along with selected examples of statements by both those who wanted Beach Drive open to vehicles on Fridays and those who wanted it closed. A separate accompanying [linked document includes all the statements submitted by residents](#) without attribution.

### Main Points Raised by Residents:

1. **Traffic Congestion & Commuting Burden.** Residents overwhelmingly cited increases in traffic and delays accessing and using roads adjacent to the neighborhood. Commuters report that the closure adds 15-30 minutes to their travel, particularly during school drop-offs and evening rush hours.
2. **Safety Concerns.** The rerouting of vehicles into residential streets has led to speeding, stop-sign running, and near misses—which is especially concerning near Kensington Parkwood Elementary School. Children walking or biking to school face elevated risks due to hurried cut-through traffic. See the linked [letter from the Kensington-Parkwood Elementary School PTA on this issue](#).
3. **Disproportionate Impact vs. Limited Benefit.** Many residents emphasized that few cyclists or pedestrians use Beach Drive during the workday on Fridays, while the closure negatively affects hundreds who rely on it for essential transportation. The adjacent paved trail remains available for cyclists and pedestrians throughout the year.
4. **Changed Circumstances Post-COVID.** The original closure was implemented for pandemic-era social distancing. After Covid, the Friday closures were eliminated for over two years because there was no longer a need. With the return of federal and other workers to offices five days a week, residents argue the rationale for Friday closure no longer holds.

### Selected comments from those in favor of opening Beach Drive to vehicles on Fridays

- *“Friday is a typical work and school day. It is exceedingly difficult to get out of the neighborhood on Fridays to drive to work or school with the road closed.”*
- *“Closing Beach Drive on Fridays is a reckless decision that disregards overwhelming community opposition, creates dangerous congestion on residential streets used by working families, and prioritizes recreational convenience for a few.”*

- *“We have already had multiple near misses of drivers speeding down Parkwood and nearly hitting my kids. One driver came so close as to hit my son’s pants.”*
- *“The closure burdens us with the dangers of the neighborhood through traffic it creates and the congestion on the surrounding roads—and on a Friday when everyone just wants to get home.”*
- *“This not only causes delays, frustration, being late for school and other commitments, but also contributes to gas emissions, traffic violations and accidents.*

### **Selected comments from those in favor of keeping Beach Drive closed on Fridays.**

- *“We love the Beach Drive closures! Both my husband and I commute by bike, using Beach Drive for part of the commute. It is truly wonderful to have parts of the commute car-free, even if it is just on Fridays.”*
- *“The Friday closure provides recreation opportunities for my children on Friday afternoons. When working from home on Fridays both my husband and I are able to enjoy the closed parkway as well during breaks. I’ve taken countless walks on Fridays with other neighbors on the closed street.”*

## **Safety Issues**

As noted in residents’ comments above, Friday closure is having unintended and potentially dangerous safety consequences. Each Friday, when Beach Drive is shut down, more vehicle traffic is pushed onto residential streets — including Parkwood Drive, Saul Road, Franklin Street, Wildwood Road, and Edgefield Road. These streets are narrow, they lack traffic signals, and they were never designed to carry the current volume of traffic.

Because many of the streets are so narrow, they become, in effect, single lane roads. There are various ways for vehicles to enter Parkwood but Consequently, even what may seem to be small increases in traffic can cause safety concerns. Such increases can come from cars that originate within Parkwood but have to travel longer within the community longer because Beach Drive is closed or from cars outside Parkwood that have to pass through because Beach is closed.

## **What the Numbers Tell Us-Traffic Volumes**

With Kyle Lukacs’ help and the support of MCDOT, we were able to get estimates of the traffic volume on some of the Parkwood streets. [See map p.10 for streets referenced.]

### *Saul Road-traffic volume*

At our request, MCDOT provided tube counts of traffic on Saul Road, which runs through the heart of Parkwood, for 24 hours on Thursday, May 1, and Friday, May 2. Findings:

- Vehicles on Saul Road west of Cedar going east or west.
  - Thursday, May 1=1258<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [\*Tube Count for Saul Road at the Traffic Light at Cedar, Thursday, East and West Bound\*](#)

- Friday, May 2=1691<sup>2</sup>
- 433 more vehicles traveled east or west on Saul on Friday compared to Thursday. This represents an increase of 34% more cars.
- Vehicles on Saul S. of Oldfield going north.
  - Thursday, May 1=392<sup>3</sup>
  - Friday, May 2=512<sup>4</sup>
  - 120 more vehicles went north Saul Road on Friday compared to Thursday. This represents an increase of 30%. The intersection of Saul and Oldfield is a special concern because it is the location of a crosswalk for children going to the elementary school.

#### *Parkwood Drive and Wildwood Road-traffic volume*

Parkwood Drive is a major boundary of both Parkwood and Kensington Estates. Vehicles that cannot travel on Beach Drive will often travel on Parkwood Drive to get either to Knowles Avenue or to Cedar Lane. Much of this traffic will go through the intersection of Parkwood Drive and Wildwood Road. A counter at this intersection indicated an increase in this traffic from Thursday, March 27 to Friday, March 28, 2025. Findings:

- Thursday, March 27=377 vehicles<sup>5</sup>
- Friday, March 28=913 vehicles<sup>6</sup>

On Friday, an additional 536 vehicles passed through this intersection, an increase of 142% or almost one and a half times the Thursday volume.

#### *Cedar Lane and Parkwood Drive-traffic volume*

Cedar Lane is the eastern boundary of Parkwood and a major through way for cars heading south toward MD355/Wisconsin Ave in the morning and returning in the evening. With Beach Drive closed on Friday, traffic increases on Parkwood Drive as more cars take this road to get to Cedar Lane. Findings:

- Thursday, March 27=136 vehicles<sup>7</sup>
- Friday, March 28=453 vehicles<sup>8</sup>

On Friday, an additional 317 cars used Parkwood Drive instead of Beach Drive to get to Cedar Lane, an increase of over 230%.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Tube Count for Saul Road at the Traffic Light at Cedar, Friday, East and West Bound](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Tube Count for Saul Road between Parkwood and Franklin Thursday, East and West Bound](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Tube Count for Saul Road between Parkwood and Franklin, Friday, East and West Bound](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Parkwood at Wildwood, 3-27-2025](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Parkwood at Wildwood, 3-28-2025](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Cedar at Parkwood, 3-27-2025](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Cedar at Parkwood, 3-28-2025](#)

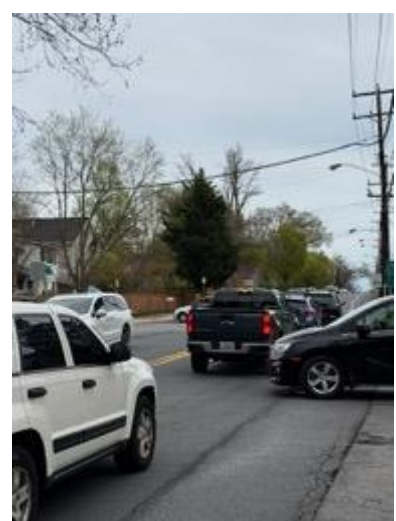


### *Parkwood Drive at Knowles Avenue-traffic volume*

Just as more cars use Parkwood Drive to get to Cedar Lane going south to reach MD355/Wisconsin Ave. when Beach is closed, more cars use Parkwood Drive to get to Knowles Avenue, often to go north to MD355/Wisconsin Avenue.

- Thursday, March 27=718 vehicles from Parkwood Drive at Knowles Ave.<sup>9</sup>
- Friday, March 28=1042 vehicles from Parkwood Drive at Knowles Ave.<sup>10</sup>

Knowles Avenue at Beach is heavily congested Monday-Friday in both directions. This makes it even more difficult when 324 more cars [a 45% increase] on Friday try to get onto Knowles from Parkwood Drive.



***Knowles Avenue and Parkwood Drive on a typical Friday. Car in the right photo is trying to get onto Knowles from Parkwood.***

### **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS-TRAFFIC VOLUME**

1. East-west traffic on Saul Road, which runs through the heart of Parkwood and directly past the elementary school, increased by 34% [433 more vehicles] on Friday.
2. North bound traffic on Saul south of Oldfield increased by 30% [120 more vehicles] on Friday. The intersection of Saul and Oldfield is at a crosswalk for children going to school.
3. The number of vehicles trying to get onto Knowles Ave. from Parkwood Drive increased by 324, or 45% more than on Thursday, thus adding to congestion at this intersection.

---

<sup>9</sup> [Parkwood at Knowles, 3-27-2025](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Parkwood at Knowles, 3-28-2025](#)

### **What the Numbers Tell Us-Traffic Speed**

The MCDOT tube counts of traffic volume cited above also included traffic speed. The findings suggest that most drivers were traveling within the speed limit on Saul Road. [\[See detailed findings here.\]](#) However, there were higher percentages of speeders on Saul south of Oldfield, which is a major concern because of 1) the location, as noted above, of the crosswalk for children going to the elementary school and 2) the fact that volume increased by 30% on Fridays on this portion of Saul Road.

Of equal concern are the findings from a study conducted by the department in the winter of 2023 on the stretch of Parkwood Drive just after Franklin Street. It showed that 85% of drivers were traveling above the posted 25 mph speed limit at 28 to 29 miles per hour.<sup>11</sup> While this may not seem like a serious matter, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety<sup>12</sup>, at 29 mph:

- 74% of people struck will suffer a moderate injury or worse
- 46% will suffer a serious injury or worse
- 7% will be killed

### **Impact on First Responders**

Friday closure also affects the work of First Responders. Below is a statement from Parkwood resident Zachary Youth, a Montgomery County Police Officer and local Volunteer Firefighter:

*“The closure of Beach Drive poses significant concerns for first responders working the greater Kensington area. I am a Police Officer and Volunteer Firefighter with a local department.*

*This closure increases response times by blocking a cut-through roadway conveniently placed on the edge of both PD and FD response areas. It also causes major traffic buildup on surrounding streets.*

*If Station 5 is unavailable, backup units must respond from the other side of Rockville Pike — fighting heavy congestion and delays just to reach neighborhoods like Parkwood via Beach Drive or Franklin Street.*

*On multiple occasions, emergency response was delayed due to locked gates on the park trail system.*

*This is a serious risk to public safety when seconds matter most.”*

---

<sup>11</sup> MCDOT, Traffic Study “RE\_81682\_Parkwood Drive between Franklin Street and Roxbury Drive”, 2023

<sup>12</sup> (2024, December 24 - Vehicle height compounds dangers of speed for pedestrians. Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS)

<https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/vehicle-height-compounds-dangers-of-speed-for-pedestrians>

## Parkwood's Request

The primary conclusions from the above analyses are the following:

1. Beach Drive is relatively underutilized by bikers, runners, and walkers on Fridays compared to the large number of drivers who must find alternative routes, which are often congested, simply to get to work, drop off kids at school, run errands, or return home.
2. Parkwood residents overwhelmingly support opening Beach Drive to vehicles on Fridays [79%]. The reasons they cite include traffic congestion and the burden of commuting, safety concerns, the disproportionate impact versus the benefit, and the changed circumstances post-Covid.
3. Safety has become an increasing and serious concern to residents.

There are, of course, alternatives to the complete and year round closure of Beach Drive on Fridays. One might be to close Beach Drive later in the day on Friday. However, this provides no relief to those who need to use Beach Drive in the afternoons and evenings. Furthermore, the number of vehicles later in the day are typically higher than in the morning. Another might be to close Beach Drive only during the summer. But again, this provides no relief to those who still must drive back and forth to work in the summer and ignores the fact that even though many children will be in summer camps, more children will still be playing outside in the neighborhood when school is not in session. Therefore, we do not consider these compromises to alleviate the problems and challenges that Parkwood residents experience.

**For all of the reasons cited above, the Parkwood Residents Association, on behalf of the residents of the Parkwood community, requests that Planning Board agree to keep Beach Drive closed to vehicles on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, but open it to vehicles on Fridays.**

**Map of Parkwood**



May 29, 2025

Chairman Artie Harris, Montgomery County Planning Board

Subject: Kensington Parkwood Elementary School Parents Teachers Association (KPES PTA) Board  
Letter of Support for Reopening of Beach Drive – Fridays

Dear Chairman Harris,

On behalf of the Kensington Elementary School PTA Board, we are writing to express our strong support for Reopening Beach Drive – Fridays. The Kensington Elementary School PTA Board is a volunteer-driven group of caregivers dedicated to enriching our children's school experience and building a connected, informed community. The PTA sponsors a variety of programs and events for students, families, and staff.

We believe that Reopening Beach Drive on Fridays is a valuable and much-needed initiative that will have a positive impact on our school community. Currently, Beach Drive closes on Fridays at 9 a.m. and the Kensington Parkwood ES school day begins at 9:25 a.m. With Beach Drive closing during peak drop off and pick up times on Fridays this impacts traffic and ability for students to get to school utilizing all nearby roads. We are supportive of having Beach Drive reopening on Fridays to allow better traffic flow, reduce commuter confusion and allow for safer school drop off. We are confident that this project will make the neighborhood safer for our kids walking to school and parents navigating drop-off and pick-up.

The Kensington Elementary School PTA Board is proud to stand in solidarity with the Reopening Beach Drive – Fridays Initiative and we humbly request the Planning Board will support us in this effort. We hope that our letter of support will be taken into consideration in this effort. Thank you, we appreciate your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Steven M. Hurvitz 

Steve Hurvitz

Kensington Parkwood Elementary School, PTA President

Kensington Parkwood Elementary School, Parent Teacher Association (KP PTA)

Tel. (703) 340-4497

[info@kppta.org](mailto:info@kppta.org) or [stevehurvitz81@gmail.com](mailto:stevehurvitz81@gmail.com)