



February 3, 2023

Dear Councilmember Parker,

We write on behalf of the members of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association (BNCA) to highlight concerns in our community and opportunities to make Brookland, Ward 5, and the city a safer, healthier, and happier place to live.

The BNCA is an all-volunteer, non-profit association that exists to advocate for and improve the quality of life of the Brookland neighborhood. With roughly 200 members representing Brookland residents, local businesses, and property owners, we strive, in coordination with our local ANCs, to represent the views of the community's views on issues of common concern.

Like other Ward 5 neighborhoods, Brookland has experienced significant growth over the last decade. While this growth sustains a vibrant community, it has created challenges for new and longtime residents and exacerbated longstanding issues with city governance and services. As we work to keep Brookland a great place to live, street safety and transportation; violence reduction and public safety; mental and emotional health issues; and pollution, trash, and environmental justice are issues that would benefit from your attention.

Street Safety and Transportation

While safe streets are a city-wide concern, Brookland's location and infrastructure make our neighborhood particularly vulnerable to traffic violence. Brookland is crisscrossed by large, high-traffic roads like Michigan, Rhode Island, and South Dakota Avenues, and 12th, Franklin, and Taylor Streets, that funnel drivers between the city core, outlying neighborhoods, and Maryland suburbs. Our streets also carry substantial heavy truck traffic, despite nominal truck restrictions. Drivers regularly cut through residential streets and speeding, and reckless driving are common. To date, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has made few changes to make conditions on major routes safer for drivers, cyclists, or pedestrians, enforce truck restrictions, or limit traffic spillover onto residential streets, while the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) performs little traffic enforcement.

We are heartened that you will bring your vision and leadership to the Committee on Transportation and the Environment and encourage you to work with DDOT to make the following changes to our streets.

Improve Safety on Brookland's Major and Minor Arterials: None of Brookland's major roads are included on DDOT's prioritized High Injury Network, despite being scenes of regular crashes, speeding, and reckless driving. DDOT should prioritize traffic calming measures along Michigan, Rhode Island, and South Dakota Avenues and 12th Street. It should also install pedestrian safety measures at high-risk intersections (e.g., 12th and Franklin, 14th and Michigan, 10th, and Michigan) and other crossing points providing access to city services, including the crossing at Michigan Ave and Quincy Street near Brookland Middle School and Turkey Thicket.

Connect Bike Infrastructure to Residential Areas: DDOT has made important improvements to area bike infrastructure, such as the expanded Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT), but more needs to be done to provide safe routes for cyclists to reach that infrastructure. DDOT's current protected bike lane plan includes no additional lanes east of 12th Street or north of Michigan Avenue. Yet these are precisely the roads where heavy traffic and reckless driving deter cyclists. The MBT should serve as a transit backbone, with dedicated bike lanes connecting residential neighborhoods to the MBT. We encourage DDOT to expand the proposed Taylor Street protected bike lane east to at least 12th Street NE and work with community leaders to identify additional bike lane options east of 12th Street NE.

Limit Truck Traffic Through Positive Signage and Enforcement: We are encouraged that DDOT is considering moving to a positive signage approach to directing truck and bus traffic. DDOT should adopt this approach and should direct truck traffic onto major arterials, with only limited exceptions. DDOT should combine this approach with monitoring and enforcement on specific streets, such as Franklin or Taylor, where truck violations are common. Enforcement should not target individual drivers, but the companies, such as Republic Trash Services, Waste Management, and Lucky Dog, whose employees regularly violate truck restrictions.

Hold DDOT Accountable to its Commitments: We encourage you to use your oversight role to ensure DDOT follows through on its commitments in a timely manner and ensure that bureaucratic issues - such as coordination between DDOT and MPD - do not impede needed safety improvements.

Prioritize All Road Users, Not Just Cars: We will not get the safe streets Brookland, Ward 5, and the city deserve until DDOT's culture shifts from designing roads to maximize drivers' convenience to designing streets to maximize safe use for all users. In the last year, Brookland has seen tragic accidents at intersections where residents' requests for safety measures went unheeded by DDOT for years. Despite Vision Zero, DDOT still measures success based on car throughput and places the burden on citizens to prove that a particular road or block is unsafe. Safety and equal access must be built into DDOT's culture so that every road design, improvement, or repaving project considers opportunities to make roads safer and improve pedestrian and cyclist access. You can help drive this culture change by interrogating DDOT's road design and performance standards and building safety and access requirements into DDOT's budget, priorities, and policies.

Violence Reduction and Public Safety

We appreciate your emphasis on public safety and your earlier meeting with the BNCA to discuss your public safety priorities. Brookland residents remain concerned about crime in the neighborhood, particularly a recent spate of car break-ins and property crime, and continued issues at known hotspots such as 14th and Rhode Island and Brookland Manor. We encourage the Councilmember to work with the Mayor and Chief Contee to provide the needed police and violence prevention resources and to improve communication and transparency on crime and public safety issues.

Mental and Emotional Health Services

We encourage increased funding for the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) to provide resources and support to those suffering mental and behavioral health challenges, particularly to bolster Community Response Teams and similar programs that bring services directly to those in need.

Pollution, Trash, and Environmental Justice

Prioritize Steps to Reduce Local Air Pollution: Ward 5 hosts a disproportionate share of the city’s industrial sites and with those, a disproportionate share of pollution. Improving bus service and restoring Metrorail to pre-pandemic levels, limiting truck traffic, and building multimodal transportation infrastructure are key to reducing pollution and improving local air quality.

Improve Trash Pickup and Street Cleaning: Sadly, many of our well-used and cherished public spaces are littered with trash. We would like the Department of Public Works to provide more frequent trash pickup and street cleaning and additional litter bins in the neighborhood, particularly along 10th Street near Turkey Thicket and at the triangle park at 14th & Rhode Island Avenue.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts and look forward to working with you on these topics in the months ahead.

Sincerely,



Kathy Jacquart
BNCA President