

FRIENDS OF
ALBEMARLE



February 15, 2023

Dear Mayor Fuller,

What is the responsibility of a community to address an intersection that the state recognizes as a “High-Crash Cluster”? The potholes, bridges and signs at Albemarle/Crafts tell the story of that designation, as they lie broken, flattened and splintered by cars unable to proceed safely through—and yet this cluster is part and parcel with North/Albemarle and North/Crafts, a trio of high-risk spaces in a community where many people walk and bike.

Risks at Albemarle are local...

The Newton residents who live within blocks of Albemarle are routinely unsettled by high-speed crashes, pedestrian near-misses, hearing squealing brakes and crunching metal. Cedar Pruitt reflects, “My daughter crosses North/Crafts twice a day, only ever at the walk light, and has video after video of not just one or two cars running the red light while she stands in the intersection...but three cars. Next year, my son will attend Day Middle. Should I drive him instead of let him walk?”

Resident Christina Abele has started doing just that; driving her children to Day and Horace Mann, adding to the traffic and yet saying, “We can’t imagine letting them walk those few blocks to school anymore. It’s just not safe.”

But drivers in this triangle aren’t safe, either. Resident Richard Dinjian says, “Driving on Crafts both today and yesterday I had cars coming from Albemarle not only NOT stop at the intersection but...actually accelerate straight through the stop sign in order to get in front of me. It’s insane!”

Many of the recent accidents, including from the past week, are documented on the [Friends of Albemarle blog](#). Local residents reflect the fear and concern felt by many in the area. “I hope it doesn't take a fatality before the City takes action,” says Matt Mazer, a Maynard St. resident. And Dan Evans quips of the unsettling regular sight of wreckage, “I could probably build a car out of the spare pieces found on North, Crafts, and Albemarle Streets.”

...and city-wide, and beyond.

The risks at Albemarle impact much more, though, than local residents. This space is undeniably a city asset. The athletic fields are the most heavily-used in the city. Day Middle School is the largest middle school with 1,000 children and almost 200 staff. The NECP preschool is an all-city venture. The impending renovation of Gath Pool will make the city's only outdoor pool into a water complex that draws even more than the current 30,000 visitors per summer. The special events at Albemarle draw tens of thousands at a time, from all over Newton and beyond. And the environmental impacts in this space have a long reach, including a creek that is a tributary of the Charles River and Atlantic Ocean.

Everyone who enjoys, uses, commutes, exercises, or appreciates Albemarle is at risk due to the unsafe driving in the area. This critical walking/biking route for F.A. Day Middle School is also used by students going to Newton North and Horace Mann. The schools combined enroll 4,000 children. And the opening of NECP in January 2023 resulted in increased vehicular traffic overlapping with F.A. Day arrival and dismissal.

What can we do?

Attached you'll find a petition for change signed by 233 Newton residents and taxpayers. Immediate short-term action is needed while we wait for the \$861,962 Safe Routes to School Infrastructure grant to make improvements in FY 2025 (<https://hwy.massdot.state.ma.us/projectinfo/projectinfo.asp?num=607977>).

The Roadway Safety Audit done in Spring 2022 by Howard Stein Hudson (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_UfHibkm_r-l8YKSmWWXxforxlt-a-wRL/view) identified many safety issues across the following six categories:

1. Speed Limits and School Zoning
2. Intersection Geometry and Conflict Points
3. Lighting
4. Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations
5. Intersection Signalization
6. Drainage

It also offered 34 recommendations, including some that can be implemented at low cost and/or in the near-term. We need **20 MPH safety zones on Crafts and Watertown** streets that include their intersections with Albemarle, through the Eddy/Eliot intersection, and signage that clearly alerts all drivers of these limits. We also support **directed patrols** with demonstrable increased ticketing for running red lights and driving at high speeds, especially during F.A. Day arrival/dismissal.

We also need swift action to install lighting, and measures taken to reduce vehicle speed and other infrastructure as outlined in the Mass DOT Road Safety Audit.

We ask that a committee determine urgently, by Friday March 17, what solutions from this list of recommendations that can be undertaken in 2023 to bring much-needed ease to this scary situation.

The City of Newton has a responsibility to ensure that people are able to walk, bike and drive to Albemarle and the surrounding area without such clear and present danger.

Sincerely,

The Board of the Friends of Albemarle

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Appendix:

- Albemarle Traffic Calming and Bike Lanes project installation planned for summer 2023. <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/transportation-planning/projects/albemarle-traffic-calming-bike-lane>
- 31 crashes at Crafts/Albemarle from 2019-2022. MassDOT IMPACT Crash Data Portal: <https://apps.impact.dot.state.ma.us/cdp/home>.