

Spring Breeze Community Association
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July 14, 2009

Lindsay A. Leiterman
Gary L. Weinberg, PhD
Office of Environmental Sustainability
Howard County Government
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Dear Ms. Leiterman and Dr. Weinberg:

We represent the board of directors of the Spring Breeze Community Association (SBCA). The SBCA is a home owners association for a group of 131 townhouses in the Village of Kings Contrivance, Huntington, located between the Little Patuxent and Middle Patuxent Rivers on Early Spring Way and Sea Shadow. The SBCA represents a population of 131 families (about 400 people) and oversees about 11.3 acres of land.

We are writing in response to your letter of May 26, 2009 and to express our interest in partnering with Howard County in the development of more sustainable conditions for communities in Columbia.

In your May 26, 2009 letter, you mention several areas of potential interest to the SBCA, including water barrels, rain gardens, and chemical reduction measures. We are interested in how Howard County could work with us to change architectural guidelines and covenants to encourage these features. We are also interested in receiving technical guidance/instruction on how to implement water barrels and rain gardens and alternatives to chemical pesticides. Help with information distribution to residents and possible sources of grant funding for community projects would be appreciated.

However, the topic of greatest interest to the SBCA and of potentially greater positive environmental impact is the replacement of our asphalt parking lots with porous paving: The SBCA owns and maintains four (4) large, monolithic parking lots and seven (7) smaller parking pads, accommodating parking for about 260 cars. Typically, parking is nearly full in our community. These parking areas are coated in inches of asphalt. They are periodically patched or milled-down and resurfaced with new asphalt. The current parking lots will be in need of resurfacing within the next few years. In fall 2007, the SBCA obtained quotes for milling and resurfacing our parking lots. The estimates were \$20,000--\$50,000 per parking lot. Asphalt is a petroleum product. Although the price of oil is lower now than in fall 2007, the cost of replacing the lots is probably not too much different. Asphalt and other non-porous parking surfaces allow

chemicals from run-off to flow unimpeded into the County's storm water management system, entering local streams, and, eventually, the Chesapeake Bay.

In some areas of the United States and Europe, driveways, parking lots, and other low-speed, low-density traffic surfaces have been made from so-called porous materials. Porous paving can consist of blocks permeated with small holes or channels (e.g., "pavers") or concrete blocks formed in a mesh-like pattern with gaps that would actually allow plant life to grow through the voids. These paving materials allow rain water to soak into the ground beneath the parking lot to some extent. This allows the soil the chance to filter the water and allows the water to reach the local water table before entering streams and the Bay. This type of paving more closely approximates the natural condition of our land before development. The soil is a good filter for some of the chemicals associated with automobiles and urban development. The water table is the natural "capacitor" for water storage before running to the Bay.

The implementation of porous paving presents challenges to communities such as the SBCA. It may be more expensive to replace a parking lot with a porous material, as opposed to straightforward resurfacing of the existing asphalt layer. The County's financial support or help in winning grants is desired. Furthermore, the SBCA would request engineering consulting support in the plan for the removal of the asphalt and the design of the underlayment that would support the top porous layer. The SBCA would also request some limited help in overseeing the construction of any new porous parking lot to ensure proper contractor performance. The SBCA and the County would perform a trade study to select the right porous material type and also estimate the long-term maintenance costs of our chosen surface material.

As an initial, pilot project, the SBCA proposes to work with the County on the implementation of a porous parking lot surface on just one of the SBCA's large parking lots and/or one of the smaller parking pads. The SBCA requests help and guidance on funding, applicable regulations, architectural guideline modifications, and covenant modifications. This prototype would demonstrate feasibility (durability, etc.) and serve as a pathfinder for future implementation across Columbia. The SBCA feels that high-density living, as found in townhouse communities, is in-and-of-itself more environmentally-friendly than other American housing solutions. As such, this improvement to our community is the ideal place to have a large impact per dollar per household in favor of the environment.

We will commit to studying this solution and implementation with the County's support and guidance. Our community has a strong history of commitment to the environment: We have regularly scheduled community clean-up days for many years. About two years ago, we halted the use of fertilizer, herbicide, and pesticide and implemented environmentally-friendly winter ice-melt in common areas in our community. Also two years ago, we generated a community billet entitled "Minister of Sustainability" on the SBCA Board to organize clean-up days, advise the SBCA on environmental and landscaping issues, and interface with outside organizations on topics related to the environment. This volunteer job is filled by a resident Board member with a strong background in environmental management.

Please consider our letter of intent and support for your pilot program.

Best regards,

Raymond G. Ohl, IV, PhD
President, Spring Breeze Community Association

Robert Colbert
Vice President, Spring Breeze Community Association

Rosalind Scott
Secretary, Spring Breeze Community Association

Ronald Vance
Minister of Sustainability, Spring Breeze Community Association