



## **BABCOCK PLACE**

Babcock Place is a six-story apartment building housing 150 senior citizens who pay subsidized rent. Situated in a largely residential area, the building faces Constitution Avenue, a four-lane thoroughfare leading to the downtown area. Thirty of the building's residents sent the city council a handwritten letter requesting a crosswalk so they could safely cross the avenue to reach a Dairy Queen, a church, and a public library. Their request was relayed to the city's traffic safety commission, five citizens appointed to advise the council on traffic control issues.

The commission sought the advice of the city's traffic engineer. Following standard procedure, the engineer conducted traffic and pedestrian counts to determine whether a crosswalk was warranted according to nationally accepted traffic safety standards. These standards are designed to balance the desire for traffic control with the need to move traffic efficiently and safely; they allow some adjustment for the elderly and other exceptional cases.

The engineer reported back to the commission that no crosswalk was warranted. Even factoring in the residents' senior status, the standards indicated that safe traffic flow required keeping Constitution Avenue open. In the engineer's professional view, a crosswalk at that location might even create a false impression of safety. Commission members returned a unanimous recommendation that the city council deny the request.

The residents of Babcock Place found the recommendation upsetting and voiced their displeasure when the request came up for discussion in the city council. They cited numerous incidents when they could not cross the street safely, and even suggested that if the city council would provide the paint, they would supply the labor. The adjacent neighborhood association also voiced its support for the crosswalk, noting that many of its members crossed Constitution Avenue to get to a supermarket near Babcock Place.

Following further discussion, the city council deferred voting on the request and asked its staff to explore alternatives to installing a crosswalk outside Babcock Place.

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This case was written by John Nalbandian, Department of Public Administration, University of Kansas, and revised for the Electronic Hallway by John Boehrer, Director of Teaching Resources.

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