

1. EAAZY BIG FELLAS!

Getting Cars to Slow Down

WHY ACT?

Like great buffalo herds, automobiles cover our landscape. But unlike the woolly beasts of the plains that stampeded only occasionally, cars—or rather their drivers—too often make it a habit. Fortunately, much of the speeding that can make life with these brawny critters a little too adventurous for most of us isn't intentional hot-rodding. It's simply the unconscious reflexes of preoccupied, harried drivers who just aren't thinking. There are gentle ways to help them wake up, slow down—and maybe even enjoy the ride a bit more. Doing so makes safer and saner streets for all of us.

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION

Level 1

- Conduct a team assessment of traffic problems on your block. (Are cars going too fast? Are they using your street to bypass a busy arterial? Is traffic noise an issue?)
- For routine speeding problems, simply putting up yard signs can be effective. Such reminders as: “30 Is Legal,” “Neighbors Drive 25,” “Thanks For Not Speeding” will often do the trick.

Level 2

- If the signs alone don't reduce speeding as much as you'd hoped, take turns with neighbors holding up the signs during rush hours; wave and smile at the drivers.
- Check with your police department or your city's department of traffic engineering to see if they will loan the electronic speed measuring devices which display the MPH of passing cars to drivers. Again, taking turns with neighbors to stand beside the displays and wave at the traffic adds a nice live-and-let-live touch.
- For chronic speeding problems, ask the police department to periodically set up speed traps. A few stiff speeding fines can work wonders.

Level 3

- For more challenging traffic problems, contact your city's traffic engineering department to see if traffic circles, speed bumps or other structural remedies are possible.
- In the most extreme cases—for instance, where new roads are needed, or noise abatement ordinances would help—it may be worthwhile to designate a special neighborhood team task force to coordinate with other neighborhood groups to pursue long term solutions involving local government.

MATERIALS

Yard signs, a directory to look up local government phone numbers.

TIME

From 30 minutes or so to make or purchase and post the signs to several hours over a period of weeks or months to let the air out of more stubborn traffic problems.

NEIGHBORHOOD GAIN

Pedestrian and bicycle safety. Calmer, safer, quieter streets and the tranquility that goes with them.

