

Dear Mayor and Council:

My name is Crystell Ferguson, I am the Community Navigation Manager at Inter-Faith Council for Social Services. Where I work in assisting members of the community facing or experiencing homelessness with resources and getting service connected with other community partners, so that they may sustain a quality of life.

In 2022 we have lost two of our members to car accident fatalities as well as had numerous members obtain bodily injuries as a result of getting struck by a vehicle walking to and from the convenient store "*Family Fare*", located on MLK, near Taylor rd. This convenient store is located in close proximity to our men's shelter as well as one of the primary affordable housing subdivisions in Chapel Hill, "*Ashley Forest*" being located right across the street.

On December 29, 2022, Christian A. Ball a Chapel Hill resident was struck by a vehicle and died of severe bodily injury in route to UNC hospital. I personally spoke with this individual just hours before this incident; where he was walking through our parking lot as he was leaving work trying to catch the bus home. He stopped to thank us for all we had done and tell us all the good that had come from it. Chris who had previously found shelter in the garage of IFC Commons for over a year had been housed in Ashley Forrest with the help of several community partners such as SOHRAD and OC CJRD, after retrieving a housing choice voucher and numerous attempts to search for housing. He was so proud to finally have a place of his own. He went on to say how he was stepping away from old habits and friends and trying to give back to others that were going through what he went through. As Chris would say, "God put me here, to help so I have to take care of them, I have to give back". He bragged about having a tax paying job and reconnecting with his kids after being estranged for an extended period of time. This man loved life; his presence could take most of the staff at IFC from wanting to pull our hair out in one moment from dealing with him to filling a room with laughter in the very next moment.

On September 8, 2022, Thomas Filter another Chapel Hill resident and IFC member, passed away from being hit by a vehicle in the same area on the scene, shortly after getting off the city bus.

This continues to be a problem; local news is reporting the numbers are continuing to go up year after year. For the safety of our community, I am asking the town to provide a crosswalk at the intersection of MLK and Taylor rd. in Chapel Hill. I am also asking that funding be provided for reflector vest and or equipment to vulnerable Orange County residents experiencing homelessness. These individuals are our neighbors, friends, and family members their lives have value, and their safety is important.