

May 15, 2013

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Re: BZA Hearing App # 18551

To: The Zoning Board Members:

We are residents of Northampton and McKinley Streets immediately adjacent to the Broad Branch Market and the Broad Branch Children's House which occupy the building at the corner of Northampton and Broad Branch Roads. We are responding to the application by Broad Branch Children's Home (BBCH) request for expansion.

The first two points we wish to make are: The notification we received is misleading. It states that the purpose of the notification is "to continue a child development center (80 children, 12 staff)" when in fact the school is seeking to expand its population by 25 percent from the current 60 students and eight staff. This lack of transparency is troubling, and it raises the question as to whether this hearing should even proceed. The second point is that the study (Ward 3 Report 18551 5608 Broad Branch Road NW Final Report) is incomplete and unbalanced.

The opening of the school and the Broad Branch market have had significant traffic and parking implications for the neighborhood and the current situation poses real hazards to the entire neighborhood, including the children who attend the BBCH.

The comments below address the existing problems. The proposed expansion will only serve to exacerbate what is already an unsafe and dangerous situation.

Traffic Congestion

There is too much traffic on the corner of Broad Branch and Northampton for a residential area. The Lafayette Public School is kitty corner to the Broad Branch School attended by more than 500 children plus faculty. Broad Branch Road and McKinley Street are significant commuter streets; traffic patterns include bus routes: E2, E4 and E6; the overflow from major arteries such as Military Road and Nebraska Avenue, particularly during the protracted closure of these streets and anticipated future closings; and the marked increase of traffic especially on Northampton from the BBCH and the market. There is no discussion in the report (Ward 3 BZA Report 18551 5698 Broad Branch Road NW Final Report) of these other factors, particularly the impact of the market on the amount and type of traffic that results from people rushing to pick up a few things at the market on their to and from work; such a discussion would give which would give a more realistic picture of the level of traffic congestion and unsafe circumstances.

Nowhere in the report is there any discussion of other school activities that also affect traffic and parking. For example, on the BBCH website, it is currently promoting different activities such as classes for mothers and parents during the day which does affect both traffic and parking.

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Parking

There is inadequate parking for the market and school as it is; no staff parking is provided for either the market or the school although the report suggests in different places that either four or six spaces exist for the school. The putative stacked parking mentioned in the report is used for different kinds of school activities but not for parking. If it were used for parking it would pose a different series of hazards as people would have to cross the heavily trafficked sidewalk that is full of children, dogs, parents, distracted shoppers, etc. The report does not address the fact that whatever parking exists is often blocked by the large delivery trucks (some of which are 18 wheel trucks that are left idling for extended periods of time in front of the market.) There is a clear overflow of parking onto adjacent streets making parking for residents at times difficult if not impossible. Note that McKinley Street is restricted to parking on one side of the street in the 3400 block and above so parking is already at a premium. The study does not address the fact that no parking is provided for the market. If, as the report claims, there is street parking available for the school, then there is none for the market.

There is no off street space for parents to drop off their children and the timing, particularly of the school closing, coincides with an increase in the volume of traffic for the store as customers are stopping by to do quick run on their way home from work. At six o'clock when the school is closing is exactly when people are rushing in and out of the market trying to make a quick stop on their way home.

Safety

The problems cited indicate that there is an existing set of circumstances that make for hazardous conditions. There is significant traffic congestion that the residential streets area not meant to handle, there is no accommodation for parking for the commercial enterprises that have been placed in the middle of a residential neighborhood; there is no system to address the times of peak activity caused by the traffic and lack of parking; there is no off street loading/unloading for the commercial enterprises or for the children. There is no enforcement of existing parking regulations, and because of inadequate parking, cars and trucks are often parked in no parking zones or the bus zones. We frequently see cars/trucks parked illegally too close to the streets, and the stop signs creating hazardous conditions for the children at both Lafayette, BBCH and other pedestrians as well as drivers. Cars block driveways and sidewalks.

As noted, there is no designated safe space to drop off and pick up children. While the report indicates that the faculty will escort children if needed the ratio of faculty to children (currently 8 to 60) appears to be inadequate. The proposed 12 to 80 is just that much worse.

Noise

There is at least one weekly event held between 5-7 on Thursday evenings which features a performer using an amplified speaker that can be heard a half a block

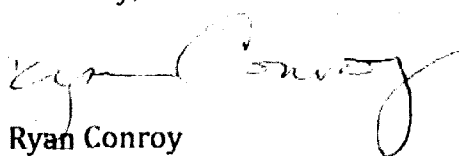
away. The noise is objectionable and the timing is unwise because it coincides with night time commuters stopping to shop. The activity is geared for very young children, held outside on the school "parking lot" and generates a very large number of very small children in an area that is not designed to ensure their safety.

Ten Year Approval Request

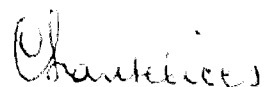
Approval of such a request seems premature since the future of the building itself is now in question. (The Northwest Current's article "Ownership in flux for Broad Branch Road site, May 8, 2013). Mr. Henry, one of the founder's of the school, stated in the article that the school is "hoping to phase in adding more students and another 2-year old classroom." There has been no discussion of a physical expansion for the building so before any approval is given, all future plans for expansion should be available for public comment.

This area is primarily residential. It is not designed for high volume traffic. The current situation poses unsafe situations on a daily basis. Parking is becoming hard to find on any given days for the people who live there. Adding to this by expanding the school another 25 percent will make a bad situation worse.

Sincerely,



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