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My name is Patricia Chick. Together with my husband, Peter Chick, I have owned and lived in the house at 1483 Harvard Street NW for the last 35 years. We also own the house at 1481 Harvard Street NW. I am submitting this statement in opposition to the variance that MCSKA LLC has requested to exempt it from providing any parking spaces for its proposed development of 1469 Harvard Street NW. Exempting MCSKA from the requirement to provide on-site parking would be a detriment to the surrounding community and would impair the intent, purpose and integrity of the Zone plan. The requested variance should be denied.

Street parking is extremely difficult in our immediate neighborhood. For starters the south side of Harvard Street in the 1400 block has rush hour restrictions, eliminating parking there from 7 am to 9:30 am and from 4:00 to 6:30 pm, and three spaces in the 2800 block of 15th street are limited to diplomatic parking between the hours of 7 am and 4 pm. Over the years as the neighborhood has improved, demand for street parking has increased. Yet the supply has been steadily decreasing in recent years. A couple of years ago the District eliminated almost 60% of the street parking in the 1500 block of Harvard Street NW (10 spaces) by prohibiting parking on the south side of that block, alongside All Souls Unitarian Church, except on Sundays and street cleaning days. When La Clinica del Pueblo moved into its building in the 2800 block of 15th Street NW, the three parking spaces in front were eliminated from the parking stock from 8 am to 6:30 pm Mondays through Saturdays. In the last few months, we believe when a charter school opened in the National Baptist Church, DOT designated 40% of the spaces in the 2900 block of 15th street (four spaces) for school parking, limited to 15-minute parking from 7 am until 9:30 am and from 3 pm to 4 pm. People who live on the block and park their cars on the street are already checking their watches and playing the kind of "park and switch" games that are commonplace in New York City but not here in Washington.

Demand for street parking continues to grow by the day, and the zoning requirements of one parking space for every two new condominium units does not pretend to keep pace with this. Building new condominium units without providing any parking would impose substantial additional burdens on the neighborhood.

We have Zone One Residential Parking Permits, and even so when we come home looking for street parking we often have to park two blocks or more away from our house. During the day, this is not a big problem, but at night it poses a risk to our personal safety that I consider unacceptable and a substantial detriment to the public good.

I understand that the Office of Planning has recommended that the variance be granted subject to the provision of a bike rack for 8 bicycles. Apparently it has concluded that

"[a]pproval of the off-street parking variance should not result in a substantial detriment to the public good as the site is well served by a number of bus routes ... and by the Columbia Heights Metro Station." But the purpose of the parking requirement is not to ensure that the neighborhood residents have access to some form -- any form -- of transportation; it is to ensure that the neighborhood residents can park their cars. Despite the availability of bus and metro transport, many of the residents of our block have cars, need them, and have to park them on the street.

The Office of Planning also notes that the applicant is proposing to provide four sub-standard spaces that would accommodate smart cars, to help mitigate any negative impact from the variance. Even if the residents of 1469 could actually get four smart cars on the property -- which seems doubtful on anything except a theoretical level -- it is not clear how this would mitigate any negative impact, unless the District is proposing to require that the occupants of the property at 1469 Harvard Street purchase smart cars and only smart cars for their use.

Finally, the Office of Planning concludes that granting the variance "should not impair the integrity of the zone plan as it supports reduced parking requirements on sites near Metro stations..." Reduced parking requirements yes -- that is what the one parking space for every two units is. Zero parking requirements no.

Granting the proposed variance would result in a substantial detriment to the public good and constitute a flagrant disregard for the integrity of the Zone plan. The application should be denied.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew J. O'Brien