

Dear Board of Zoning Adjustment Members,

I previously submitted testimony (exhibit #76) and maintain firm opposition to BZA Case 19377: The Boundary Companies and The Missionary Society. In watching the hearing on April 25, 2018, I was struck how important images are in this case, and I want to share several as a part of my additional testimony. Many images provided by the developer do not share the true story and importance of this bucolic land, and I am providing pictures taken from simple camera phones and Google maps to aid your understanding.

As noted in my previous testimony, this area of the city is devoid of adequate parks and recreation areas.

According to the National Capital Planning Commission's Comprehensive Plan, the Paulist and Holy Redeemer properties (institutional properties) should be prioritized for parkland. Note the Holy Redeemer property has already succumbed to development. The remaining Paulist land is used by Chancellor's Row (CR) residents and Lee/Washington Leadership Academy schools, as well as people from the larger Brookland/Edgewood community. To lose nearly all this green space is not an improvement, but a detriment to how our community functions in our free time. This green space facilitates regular conversations with our neighbors and wonderful children interactions and play, deepening our sense of community and camaraderie. The proposed development will not only detrimentally impact the use and enjoyment of residents in the nearby homes, but also negatively impact children and families from every Ward in DC.

The first time that my husband and I drove into CR, I literally had a minor anxiety attack due to the sardine-like density of the homes—and I was moving from even more dense property on 16th and U St NW. Then I saw the beautiful vista and grove of trees in the remaining Paulist property and was **assured by EYA representatives that it could not be further developed.** That grove of trees reminded me of the grove of trees in my childhood farm home in Iowa, providing a critical windbreak from prairie winds and a space for endless adventures and exploration during my formative years. Upon seeing that grove (and seeking to avoid another fixer-upper), I began to reevaluate the need for a private yard and considered this an option for our future family.

We ended up moving into our home (just behind the stone homes overlooking the grove) shortly before our first child was born in 2012. After we moved in, it took me over a year to stop feeling like we were living in a fishbowl, too closely surrounded by our neighbors. To the right is an image from driving west on Regent Place NE, with the packed-in houses and the gorgeous trees that are being threatened at the far end.



The developer's images of CR have been limited to the top and front views of the, homes which do not portray how dense these homes truly are.

Today, our two children, as well as children from around Brookland and Edgewood (including the local Brownie Troop), are able to explore and play in this grove and sled down the hill during the winter. The hill from 4th Street NE looking up to the school buildings has such a steep grade that I can't fathom how upon which a development could reasonably be made, without extensive earth-moving and tree root system decimation. **The developer noted during the April 25, 2018 hearing that there are many challenges with this site, including "significant topographical challenges" across the 20 foot grade and the need to overhaul the storm water management (SWM) system, as they are planning to build upon a drainage ditch that regularly floods.** Below is a picture taken by a neighbor from part-way down the hill, looking up to the Lee Montessori building.



Our son currently attends Lee Montessori (to be followed soon by our daughter) and is regularly able to explore this gorgeous grove with his classmates from around the city. Not only will the loss of this greenspace impact his life at home, but further impact him in his school life. The Lee Montessori children below are cleaning up the drainage ditch, playing in a mountain of leaves generated by those amazing trees, looking for snakes (which they later found), swinging in the trees, and taking some of their regular nature hikes. (Children's faces were primitively obscured to protect their privacy, but they were all smiling!) The proposed development site also regularly hosts spontaneous and organized playdates after school, Lee family picnics, and many more events, **allowing children and families from all over DC to enjoy this natural beauty.** I was appalled when the Paulist representative insinuated during the April hearing that the land is largely used by nearby dog owners. **Lee Montessori children from all DC Wards, both now and decades to come, are incredibly fortunate to have an opportunity to receive an education in this idyllic park-like setting and to have that taken away to line a developer's pockets is beyond reproach.**



With the nonstop activity in our home surrounding our two small children, I am able to enjoy a moment of bliss multiple times a day by looking at the grove while doing dishes or preparing meals. Below is the current view from the window above my kitchen sink (though the screen). If the developer has their way, this view will become another wall of houses, ensuring that views from every window of my home consist of a myriad of houses that are shockingly close together. (Note, a man is standing just above the sign, to give a sense of scale.) Aside from the devastating long-term impacts of the development of this property, the construction period will be unbearable for myself and my family. All of my family has severe dust allergies, and we will not be able to go outside and play for months if not years. Neither of my children will be able to get away from the construction noise and debris between their school and home life. I work from home 2-4 days a week, often on lengthy client conference calls that will be disrupted with construction noise. I require an ergonomic workstation for health reasons and I have no alternate work location, so the construction will significantly impact my work. **The detrimental construction impacts in the short term, and the long-term impacts of the loss of this view and access to this green space will surely decrease my property value and negatively affect the use and enjoyment of everyone in our household.**



The “springing easement” suggested by DDOT to connect 4th and 7th Streets via Regent Pl. should be rejected by BZA and would be unnecessary if the development were limited per my recommendation described below. **If Regent Pl. does get connected to 4th Street, it would further reduce the value of my property and the enjoyment and use of my home that overlooks Regent Pl.** CR was approved to have significantly narrower roadways with houses positioned very close to the curb, as these roads were never intended to accommodate a larger volume of traffic. Given the volume of traffic that regularly impacts Michigan Ave. (which doesn’t have houses) to the North and Franklin St. to the South (which is markedly wider), Regent Pl. would become everyone’s favorite cut through. The increased traffic and likelihood of speeding will make the streets very unsafe for my children and those in the neighborhood. Based on the Google Map “measure distance” feature, there is a 30-35 foot distance between the curb of Franklin St. to the front door of the houses, whereas there is only a 12 foot distance between the Regent Pl. curb and our home, and notably my children’s bedroom windows. Franklin St. is 30 feet across, whereas Regent Pl. was approved to be only 26 ft across. To underscore how narrow the space is between homes, CR residents are able to string holiday lights from their roof decks

across Regent Pl. **If this easement is allowed, the city must take over the maintenance of CR's private streets and install speed humps to calm traffic.**

It is my understanding that the developer is seeking to relocate the current school parking lot right up against the building, destroying yet another mature tree and the circle driveway that is critical to school traffic flow during peak arrival and dismissal times. This will also destroy the welcoming entrance to the school (shown below), requiring that the current entrance be moved below ground and demand that 3-year-olds take stairs to get to their classrooms. I am not aware of any documented agreements between the developer and the schools, and **at no point has the developer attempted to meet with the parents of either school, who are clearly stakeholders that should be considered based on their attendance at the April hearing and the volume of testimony submitted.**



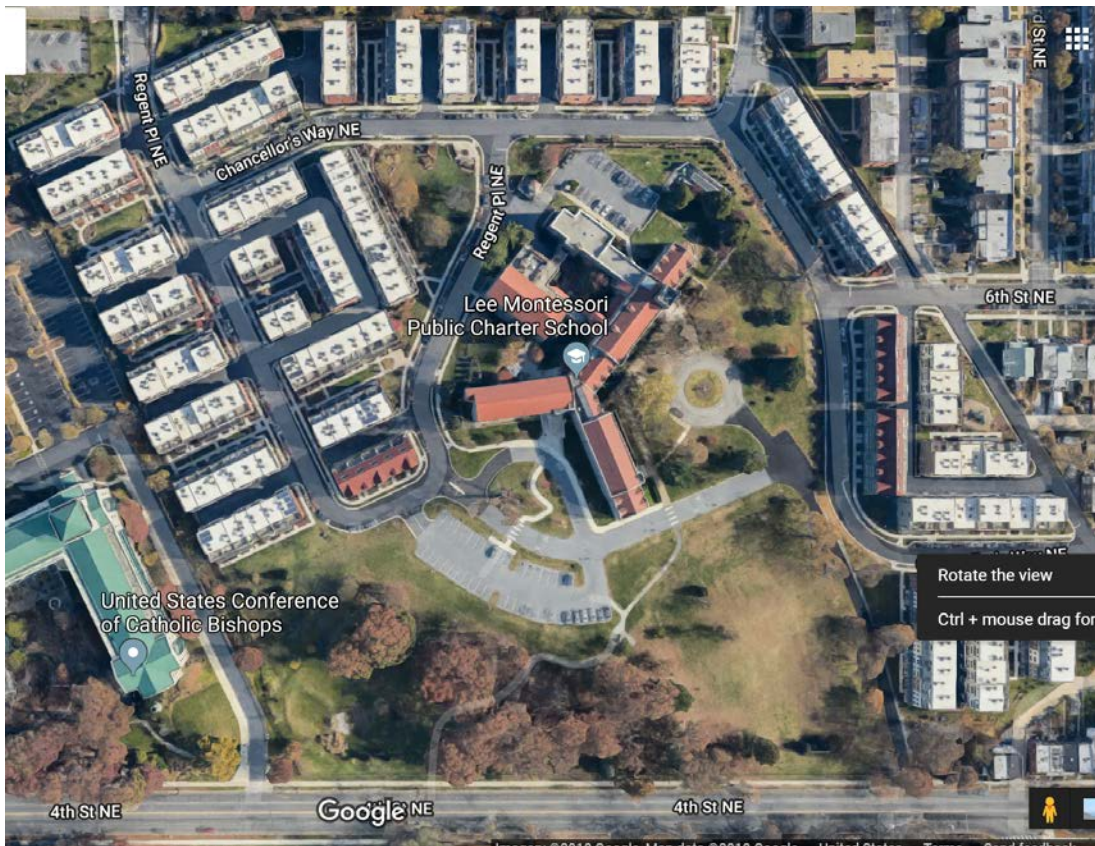
I certainly appreciate the work and mission of the Paulists, as well as their generosity (as common law requires) in sharing this institutional green space with the community. However, I am perplexed that after making millions of dollars from the sale of the overly dense Chancellor's Row property *and* being a shrinking order, that they are in such dire straits. It would stand to reason that the sale of their 102,000 square foot building would provide more than enough funding to create a new building that is approximately 1/5 the size and still provide ample support for their aging brothers. Children and families from across the city enjoy this institutional land, in an area with limited parks and green space, and we ask the BZA to continue to allow us to do so. **If the Paulists are allowed to build a second building, it should be done with the documented understanding that the surrounding land will not be further developed nor should the new building be sold to another entity or for non-institutional use,** particularly now that the land has a historic designation.

The applicant's depiction of the size and shade cover of the existing trees during the April 2018 hearing (slide 3 of their presentation) was disturbingly inaccurate and could only have been taken during the dead of winter when few leaves remained. I recently asked my neighbor, who is in the stone home overlooking the school parking lot, to take the following photos from her home to better represent the current trees. The first is facing the South, the second facing the North.

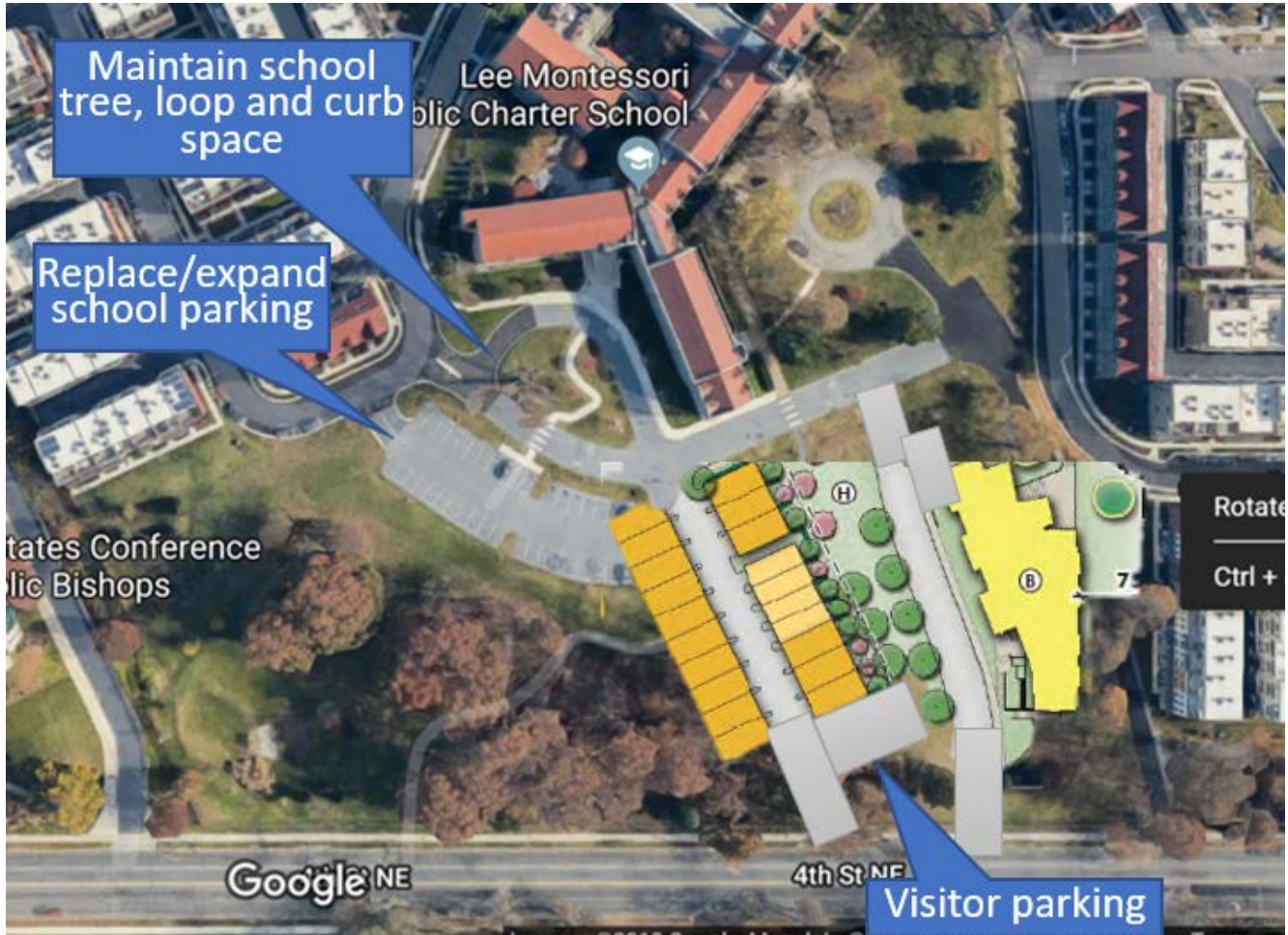


A visit to Google maps also provides a more accurate depiction of the trees and shade cover that will be lost, despite the developer's claims that overhauling the SWM system, conducting significant regrading, and building 60 houses with the aid of major construction equipment will not damage the tree root systems. The developer also grossly misrepresented the trees that are around the schools, which are currently insignificant. Both are provided for comparison below. The first graphic was the developer's slide 19, the second is from Google Maps. North is to the left in both.

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It is readily apparent to the untrained eye that there is a significant grade and houses in close proximity on the north end of the property (which regularly floods) and the logical place to build is on the South side to limit tree loss and impacts on all neighbors (Chancellor's Row, the schools, and U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops). Although there was discussion of limiting the development to 30 homes, **I am proposing limiting it to 20 with the new Paulist building (or 30 without the Paulist building)**. My crude overlay of the two images is shown below, with a looped roadway connecting the Paulists, the schools, and the new houses.



Other benefits of this recommendation include:

- Limited disruption to the schools and CR residents
- Limited loss of property value in CR
- Limited water runoff concerns (and significant cost savings to the developer to not move the volume of earth and overhaul the SWM system)
- Minimal tree loss, including to the root system which can result in die off years after construction (a prominent problem within CR now 3-5 years after construction)
- Limits increased traffic, **which will surely become considerable with DDOT's planned shrinking of 4th Street for bike lanes**

Should the townhouses and/or Paulist construction occur, the BZA should mandate that the developer meet the following requirements:

- No construction vehicles shall utilize the school driveway during peak drop-off and pick-up times (from 8:15-8:45am and 3:30-4:30pm).

- No construction vehicles shall park in the school parking lot (or in Chancellor's Row) at any time
- No construction vehicles will use CR streets at any time
- Provide robust plan for visitor and additional parking for the new townhomes and Paulists that does not utilize the school lot or CR street parking
- Provide adequate parking for the schools at their full planned capacity (there are approximately 45 cars parking at St. Paul's each day, so at least 90 spots should be available as the schools double in size)
- Do not reduce the current circular lane and curb space at the schools to accommodate drop-off and pickup of young children during peak periods
- Expand the driveway and curb cut for the schools to fully accommodate 2-way traffic
- Publish and adhere to a plan to limit the environmental and noise pollution on the young school children as they play outside during recess
- Provide public access easements for streets and sidewalks
- Provide long-term tree protection and 100% preservation of heritage trees
- Provide the following to the schools and the 3 CR rows of homes that face the proposed development:
 1. Preconstruction and postconstruction surveys (in case of construction damages) and associated repairs
 2. Power washing the walls, sidewalks, and roads throughout construction and once the development is completed

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Renner

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