

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Barbara Bempohl <bempohls@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2017 5:13 PM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: BZA case number, 19450

To Whom It May Concern:

As the owner of 3 properties located in McLean Gardens within 200 feet of the proposed homeless shelter which is slated to be built at 3320 Idaho Ave. NW next to the 2nd District police station, I wish to register my STRONG DISAPPROVAL of the temporary homeless shelter, as planned. This is so wrong on so many levels!! I am not available to attend the BZA meeting on March 1st in person, so I am sending my thoughts to you. I do very much hope the BZA will block this shelter from going forward as planned. Here are my reasons:

1) First and foremost, **I object to the PROCESS** as this proposal has gone forward. Neighbors were not consulted, and obviously not given any consideration before Ms. Cheh, Mr. Mendelson, and Ms. Bowser tried to ram-rod this ill-conceived project through. The size of the shelter has increased dramatically over time, until now it is totally out of proportion to the rest of the surrounding neighborhood. The number of families the shelter is projected to serve has also nearly doubled. **The cost has ballooned to \$30 million (!) so that the original rationale for placing the shelter at this location has been invalidated.** Surely a different site without the problems associated with this site would not cost so much as this. And if we're going to spend \$30 million, I would think that some of the vacant/derelict housing across DC could be renovated to provide real homes for these families so that they could really become integrated into a community, rather than the half-measure of providing "temporary shelter" where the people will always be viewed as outsiders and not part of any community. But it seems that all of our cries and pleas to stop and consider the consequences are being ignored. That is NOT how democracy should operate. Whatever happened to government of, by and for the people? We are the people who pay the taxes and vote! **Shouldn't our opinions count?**

2. To my knowledge, there has been no serious study made of how this designated location adjacent to the District 2 Police Station will affect the on-going police operations, the local schools that will be impacted by the additional student load, the traffic and parking in the neighborhood, the impact on local commercial establishments, and the overall quality of life of existing residents of the neighborhood. This "rush to judgment" will not serve the citizens of this community well--neither the residents of McLean Gardens, nor the projected residents of the proposed shelter. **It is my strong opinion that alternate sites should be considered.**

3. Nor has much consideration been given to the projected residents of this proposed homeless shelter. I've reviewed the plans for the shelter and I find them lacking in benefits for the population the shelter is seeking to serve. For example, there is no day care facility at the shelter! How are mothers to be expected to go to work and build stable lives without a safe and affordable place for their children to be during those hours when the mothers will be working? For food service, there is only a "warming kitchen". Will ready-prepared meals be brought in, warmed up and served? So that means that the residents of the shelter will not be able to purchase fresh food and prepare meals for their families? How is that teaching the families anything about nutrition and self-reliance? What if some residents have different dietary requirements? How is that preparing these mothers to build stable lives and take care of their families? Would it not be better for THEM to live in an environment that prepares them for independent living? Or is this not really a "temporary" shelter, but instead a kind of permanent incarceration in poverty?

4. Most egregious of all is the architectural plan that has been proposed. It's like a size 12 woman trying to wriggle into a size 6 dress! Clearly, the plot of land is not large enough to fit everything onto the designated parcel. It exceeds the zoning for the neighborhood pretty much in all directions. The proposed shelter will stand 6 stories high (72 feet), plus an additional 10-15 feet "penthouse" for mechanical equipment on the roof. This compares to the 40-foot/3 stories height permitted by current zoning regulations and is approximately double the height of the police station. **At its meeting on February 21st, the ANC3c voted to reject the variance to exceed the height restriction.** I hope the BZA will heed the ANC's recommendation on this point. There would also be a 3-story "parking deck" to accommodate police cars, and those of staff, residents and visitors to

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the shelter. That would exceed the height of the police station itself! In addition, as explained in the city's application, there would be no loading dock for the building, and because of its height, it would shade a significant number of gardens in the community garden for most of each morning in the summer. The city requires multiple variances and "special exceptions" to current zoning regulations in order to proceed, hence the BZA hearing. **I strongly object to the size of this proposed facility. It is simply all out of proportion to the surrounding buildings. I urge the BZA to reject these variances and special exceptions.**

5. Within the past couple of weeks, we have learned that in order to accommodate the police vehicles and construction equipment during the 18-month construction period, that the tennis courts located in Newark St. Park will be appropriated for short-term parking. This will deny those citizens who wish to use the tennis courts for the purpose they were intended. As a resident of McLean Gardens for more than 20 years, I know that those tennis courts are well used, especially during the warm weather months. In addition, we understand that an access road will be used to access the tennis courts/parking area. That access road runs right alongside a children's playground and our local neighborhood dog park which potentially will put our children and pets and their owners in harm's way. At the very least, it will disrupt the tranquility that neighborhood residents seek as they go to the park each day for recreation. And it will likely also disrupt the strong sense of community that these facilities generate. We are also warned that some portion of the Newark St. Community Garden will be affected by the parking/construction too. These gardens comprise a valuable part of our community, and the gardeners will also object to the degradation of this historic garden that dates back to WWII. **At its meeting on February 21st, the ANC3c voted to reject the exception to destroy Newark St. Park's tennis courts and some of its garden space. I hope the BZA will endorse the opinion of the ANC on this point.**

6. Lastly, I point to the general inconvenience that this neighborhood will face AGAIN from on-going construction. The Cathedral Commons project took some years to reach completion, and we neighbors suffered the noise and dust and traffic and disruption to our lives all during that time. Now, finally, we are enjoying the new shopping and dining facilities. We do not wish to start again with construction hub-bub.

I know that there are groups who counsel compassion for the proposed residents of the temporary homeless shelter. Believe me, I do want these women and children to have better lives. But I don't believe that's what will be achieved by this particular design in this particular location. I believe they will be better served in a location with greater proximity to a metro station, for example. That way, they will be better able to get to work which will go a long way towards improving their condition in life. I believe that they need to be offered day care facilities, which this shelter location does not provide for. I believe they need training in life skills so that they may begin the long journey to self-sufficiency. This shelter in this location does not offer that either. So if we truly wish to help these families, we will slow down a bit and seek a better location where ALL of their needs can be met.

I urge the BZA to soundly reject this application for exceptions and exemptions. There is a zoning plan in this city for a reason. We don't want to ruin a thriving community by placing this gargantuan eyesore in our midst!

Thank you for taking my views into consideration.

Sincerely,
Barbara Bermpohl
owner of properties located at:
3801 Newark St. NW # D-430
3851 Newark St. NW # D-460
3611 39th Street NW # C-327