

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Katherine Thomas <ktwordplay@xmission.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 23, 2017 8:45 AM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Case number 19450

Hello Zoning Board,

There has been a lot of discussion about the homeless shelter but I think that very little attention has been paid to the people who will live in the shelter, and that concerns me. The previous location, DC General, for all its faults, is on a Metro line and near a Metro station, giving shelter residents easy access to all parts of the city. The Idaho Avenue site is over a mile away from the closest Metro station. This presents huge problems for parents with small children because the shelter won't have daycare. Imagine being a mom with two or three toddlers who's trying to get a job. Where can you safely leave the kids while you go to job interviews? Or when you reach out to social services that have offices in other wards? Bus service is not any better. I can only imagine taking multiple busses with children on your hip or in a carriage.

What about healthcare? There are no clinics or hospitals close by. What happens when your son breaks a leg jumping from a chair at 9:00 pm, or your daughter wakes up in the middle of the night with severe asthma and can't breathe? Where do you go and how do you get there? What about accessing services at Medicaid and Food Stamp offices? How do you get there—transfer to several bus lines with kids in tow? If you're participating in a Rapid Re-housing program, how can you visit apartments all the way across the city? And, who is going to arrange and pay for all that transportation?

Then there is the facility itself. Residents will be housed in cubicle units with shared bathrooms for most, no kitchens, and dorm meals (all brought in three times a day by truck). That's in addition to the lengthy commutes on public transportation to access schools, services, and job training. AND, it's located next to a police station, where there is activity, noise, and drama 24-hours a day. Imagine finally getting your fussy child to sleep and a police car takes off with lights flashing and siren blasting. So much for any sleep.

I have never been homeless, but I can imagine that it's a shattering and demoralizing experience. Placing these vulnerable people in such a high-stress situation, far from their own communities, affords neither dignity nor safety, and I believe it severely limits the chances for successful outcomes.

I hope someone will take a closer look at the people this shelter is designed to help to see if it is actually doing what it's intended to do. I oppose the proposed shelter on Idaho Street until the city conducts a rigorous and transparent search for alternative sites so we can be assured that this is the best site, not just for the city, not just for the neighborhood, but the homeless—the people we want to succeed and thrive. There are those who will object to any delay, but we are devising policies that will affect this city for decades and it is important that we get it right.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine Thomas,

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McLean Gardens

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.19450
EXHIBIT NO.181