Summary of Current and Projected Parking Problems Around the Medlink Hospital Property

16407

Although the various city agencies and boards have been asked to review this project piecemeal, it is important to examine the current situation, as well as the proposed project in its entirety to realize its full impact on the neighborhood. Neighbors have noted that parking has increasingly become a problem in the last few years. This problem will be exacerbated by any development, but can become critical without careful planning.

1. Current Situation. As a first step to moving from the anecdotal to the factual regarding the current parking situation, CHCSD volunteers counted available parking spaces within two blocks of the MedLink facility (owned by Capitol Hill Group). This survey was conducted on Sunday, August 13 between the hours of 10PM and 11PM and consisted of one count that took one hour to complete. The volunteers counted spaces in the 58-block area bounded by E. Capitol Street, D Street NE, 5th Street NE and 10th Street NE. They found 71 legal spaces and 54 illegally-parked cars to arrive at a net total of 17 legal spaces. The detailed space count is presented in Table 1.

This is a snapshot of the current parking situation in which MedLink has approximately 299 off-street spaces. Ninety nine of these spaces, counted by a CHCSD volunteer, are located on the west side of the 200 block of 7th Street NE (Square 865), 24 surface spaces atop their underground garage south of the 700 block of C Street NE (Square 895), and 176 spaces[1] in the underground garage. MedLink was required by the October 1999 Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) Order to provide 276 off-street spaces as a result of its petition to add 32 additional beds to its nursing facility for a total of 162. It should be noted that these 276 parking spaces were to accommodate patients, staff and visitors.

2. Above Ground Parking Lot on 7th Street (Square 865) As noted above, these lots have approximately 99 spaces. On April 21, 2000 MedLink requested the BZA to reduce its off-street parking requirements for the nursing facility to 199 spaces. This request asks the BZA to revise its Order of October 1999, allowing MedLink to lower the parking requirements from 276 to 199 and to correct the assignment from Square 865 to Square 895. This request would eliminate the need of the 99 parking spaces on Square 865, effectively allowing the sale of the lots to Holladay Corporation for construction of townhouses.

3. Underground Parking and Above Ground Parking off C St (Square 895). There remains some confusion as to the number of spaces in the underground garage and whether or not it is truly open for parking. Recently, Medlink and Holladay Corporation representatives have maintained the underground garage has 176 spaces [see footnote 1]. However, in the October 1999 BZA order Capitol Hill Group's General Counsel's statement[2] about plans "to open an underground garage that will add 144 spaces to the existing 132 spaces for a total of 276" indicated the garage may only have 144 spaces. The "existing 132 spaces" implied there were 33 above ground spaces in addition to the 99 on Square 865. In the most recent application,

[1] Number stated in a letter to Ms Sheila Cross Reid from Richard Nettler, April 21, 2000.

[2] Statement of Proceedings an Evidence, *BZA Order Number 16407*, Hearing Date: January 6, 1999; Final Order Date: October 21, 1999.

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however, the number of above ground spaces on Square 895 has been reduced to 24 [see footnote 1] and so the number of off-street spaces may be as low as 168 (144 + 24) once the townhouses are built. An accurate documentation of available off-street parking on Square 895 would be appreciated.

Furthermore, during the 1999 hearings for MedLink's request to add 32 beds, it was noted that MedLink had never complied with previous orders to open their underground parking facility off C St on Square 895. The reason given was that there was ample parking above ground [see testimony of Ms Ellen McCarthy in footnote 2]. Although MedLink provided documentation[3] that the facility opened on January 27, 1999, it appears not to have been opened to general staff and visitors. More recent testimony at the August 21, 2000 ANC6A meeting indicated that the underground garage was still not open. Level one was partly being used for storage, and the lower two levels were blocked off – apparently due to a water accumulation problem. Capitol Hill Group was unable to explain why the lower two levels were blocked off. The ANC6A Zoning and Licensing Committee subsequent to its meeting requested[4] that the BZA reopen Case #16407 based on the evidence and testimony presented and MedLink's failure to comply with the existing order.

It is clear that the total spaces for the underground facility and above ground spaces on Square 895 totals 168 to 200, and would not allow MedLink to comply with the 1999 BZA Order to provide 276 parking spaces. Hence, MedLink/Holladay's attorneys argue that Zoning only requires one parking space for nursing care resident, and that the 200 spaces on Block 895 is sufficient to meet the needs of patients, staff and visitors. However, there are serious concerns from neighbors of the assertion that 200 spaces would be sufficient for patients, staff, visitors and vendors, and whether the underground facility could meet required city codes in order to be utilized. Additionally, it is not clear that the 200 spaces are actually available for parking because of the apparent ambiguity in the total number of spaces in the underground garage and uncertainties about whether some spaces would be opened due to standing water or use as storage.

4. St. James Church Parking. It should be noted that MedLink inherited an obligation from a prior agreement to permit St. James Church to use the hospital's parking facilities for church services and functions. This agreement was made on September 26, 1971 with Rogers Memorial Hospital in exchange for St. James Church assigning to Rogers all its right, title and interest in and to the land then used as the alley that abutted the south and west sides of its property, and consenting to the closing of said alley. To the best of our knowledge this agreement is still in force. The request before the BZA neglects to mention this agreement and the space needed to meet this agreement. St. James has expressed its concerns that MedLink has requested the BZA change without consulting the parish, or making accommodations for their parking rights.

5. MedLink's Request for Change of Parking Designation on 7th Street, N.E., from Zone 6 to Three Hour. In September 1999 MedLink petitioned and received permission from Department of Public Works to change the designation of parking on the 200 block of 7th Street, N.E. from Zone 6 to 3 hour parking to accommodate visitors. MedLink's attorneys argue that

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[3] Affidavit presented to the BZA by John K. Lunsford, General Counsel to Capitol Hill Group.
[4] Letter to Ms Sheila Cross Reid from Commissioner Gregory Ferrell, August 22, 2000.

reducing MedLink's available parking by 99 spaces by converting the 7th Street parking to townhouse development will not reduce the sufficiency of MedLink' parking capacity. However, MedLink's action in September 1999 questions whether the **current** parking capacity (i.e., both Squares 895 and 865) is sufficient

6. Impact of Townhouse Development. The planned townhouse development will increase the demand for parking. A total of 17 new townhouses are proposed. Apparently two of the proposed new townhouses do not have garages planned, and no parking is proposed for the *Louise*, which the developer currently plans to renovate. Additionally, each townhouse is configured for a basement apartment. It is assumed that the occupants will have visitors.

7. Continued Plan for Approximately 240 Unit Apartment Building on the South End of MedLink. At the August 21st Special ANC meeting (to review the MedLink modification of their BZA offstreet parking requirements), the MedLink/Holladay attorney, Jeannine Rustad (of Robins, Kaplan, Miller, and Ciresi L.L.P.) stated that the developer continues to plan for an approximately 240 unit apartment facility. At this point, apparently the developer has chosen to ignore calls by neighbors and neighborhood organizations for a reduced size and scale. The developer argues that they plan to provide one parking space per unit which exceeds the R5D zoning requirement. However, neighbors remain concerned that the actual parking requirements for 240 units and their visitors may easily be twice this number.

Table 1. Parking survey conducted Sunday August 13, 2000 between 10PM and 11PM

*(*Block has restricted parking -- not counted)*

Street	Block	Available Spaces	Illegally Parked Cars	Net Spaces
5th St., NE	Units	0	0	0
	100	0	1	-1
	200	0	0	0
	300	7	0	7
6th St., NE	Units	0	0	0
	100	0	0	0
	200	4	0	4
	300	7	0	7
7th St., NE	Units	0	0	0
	100	0	0	0
	200*			0
	300	0	0	0
8th St., NE	Units	0	1	-1
	100	1	0	1
	200	1	4	-3
	300	1	2	-1
9th St., NE	Units	1	1	0
	100	0	2	-2
	200	1	4	-3
	300	3	0	3
10th St., NE	Units	0	2	-2
	100	0	2	-2
	200	1	1	0
	300	0	2	-2
E. Capitol St., NE	500	3	0	3
	600	0	0	0
	700	0	2	-2
	800	0	1	-1
	900	0	2	-2
A St., NE	500	0	0	0
	600	0	2	-2
	700	0	1	-1
	800	0	0	0
	900	0	3	-3
Constitution Ave., NE	500	0	1	-1
	600	0	2	-2
	700	0	0	0
	800	1	1	0
	900	0	1	-1
C St., NE	500*			
	600	4	0	4
	700	6	0	6
	800	1	2	-1
	900	0	1	-1
D St., NE	500	5	0	5
	600	5	2	3
	700	1	1	0
	800	4	2	2
	900	1	1	0
Maryland Ave., NE	500*			
	600	7	2	5
	700	1	1	0
	800	0	3	-3
	900	0	0	0
Massachusetts Ave., NE	600	5	0	5
	700	0	0	0
	800	0	0	0
	900	0	1	-1
Total	**58 Blocks**	**71**	**54**	**17**

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