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TO: ANC-3D (John Finney & Eleanor Lewis)
FROM: Sharon and Charles Houy, Residents at 4922 Ashby St. N.W.
Date: February 16, 2002
Subject: Establishment of a Junior High School at 4925 MacArthur Blvd.

We have lived at 4922 Ashby St. N.W. for almost 19 years. During that time, we have valued the peacefulness of our little block. While several families on the street have remodeled their homes keeping in the style of Palisades, the street has otherwise remained unchanged during those 19 years. We have enjoyed our quiet street, yet the convenience of a main artery only half a block away. We love the Palisades because it is like living in small town America - right in Washington, D.C. The introduction of a junior high into this residential area will completely destroy this neighborhood as it exists today - not just for us but for all the residents of this short block of Ashby St. and neighbors on MacArthur Blvd. We strongly oppose St. Patrick's expansion to this property.

Our house is a mere 11 ½ feet from the property line -and the parking lot for the intended school. Our patio is only three feet away. We are concerned about 4 basic issues: traffic, safety, noise, and resale value of our home.

Traffic: Our fenceline goes right along the parking spaces for 4925 MacArthur. Our driveway parallels theirs. My daughter goes to Key Elementary School. She walks to school because traffic is so bad during the morning drop-off. So, I know what school traffic is like. The impact of school drop-off will be unbearable on our narrow little block. Traffic now can only flow in one direction if cars are parked on the street. It is already difficult if someone is coming down the street and another car heads up the street. Parking has been a problem on our street, as only one house has a usable garage. Currently, the families on the street have adequate parking for our needs. Taking away any of those spaces for emergency vehicles will put us in a bind. Having parents or staff park on the street will make it impossible for us to park. Moreover, we leave for work at the precise time that students will be arriving. This will be a disaster for us, as it is nearly impossible for us to get out of our driveway now if someone is illegally parked between our two driveways. Our street will become a magnet for drop-off - no matter how the school tries to do it.

Safety: Regarding the traffic, we are very concerned about related safety issues. I have a young child and I fear she will be hit by one of these cars. We are unaccustomed to cars departing the school parking lot or street in any volume at all during the day. Moreover, as a homeowner with a swimming pool, I am very concerned about the liability I will face with so many young people next door every day. Kids are kids and temptation will be great for them to enter our yard for a swim. We expect that we would have to increase significantly our liability insurance.

Noise: We live in a peaceful setting that is only disturbed by the evening and weekend arrival and departure of cars for sessions at the current institute. The noise of those cars before and after sessions is tremendous and it gives us a feeling of what it will be like on a

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daily basis for the school. Our house is very close to this property - only 11 ½ feet away. Four years ago we literally moved our house forward on the property to allow for more room for raising a child. This moved our living room, dining room and all bedrooms parallel with the building on 4925 MacArthur. We have someone at home all day and our daughter comes home right after school. They enjoy the peace and quiet of our street - as do the rest of our retired and stay-at-home families on the block. When people arrive and depart for meetings at the subject property, we hear every footstep, conversation, car door and engine. And this is with all of our windows CLOSED. And these are responsible adults. Children are much noisier and have less awareness of the noise they are causing. Moreover, the introduction of a basketball hoop will be intolerable by us and other neighbors. The sound of that hollow, bouncing ball is extraordinarily loud. I raised this issue with St. Patrick's at the Palisades Citizens Association meeting and my concern has been ignored - even dismissed - by St. Patrick's.

Property Value: We have worked very hard and spent a great amount of money over the past 19 years to turn our ramshackle carriage house into our dream home. When we invested this money into our home four years ago, we did so with the plan that we would get this investment back when we sell our house upon retirement. While having a quality school in one's neighborhood is a plus for resale value, having it right next door will have an adverse impact on the property values to the surrounding homes. How can St. Patrick's claim that our values will go up when the property next to their current school has been turned into a rental? Is this what the neighborhood wants to see for our homes, too? None of my neighbors can afford a decline in our property values. We fear that the introduction of a school 11 ½ feet from our house will adversely impact our property value.

As my neighbors are disappointed with the assurances provided to date by St. Patrick's, so are we. Suddenly St. Patrick's is talking about 9th grade and other options which it soundly rejected at our PCA meeting. Suddenly it is talking about buses, which it soundly rejected as well.

In summary, we feel that the conversion of the property at 4925 MacArthur Blvd will have a significant negative impact on our quality of life in terms of traffic, safety, noise and property values. Of all of the options for use of the property, I cannot think of another option that will have a greater environmental and personal impact on the residents of the 4900 block of Ashby Street. We ask that the ANC not support St. Patrick's request for a special exception to the Zoning Code for the property located at 4925 MacArthur Blvd. We strongly favor the purchase of the property for the building of one additional residence, as has been proposed by another buyer. This would keep the integrity of our neighborhood in tact.

Sincerely,

Sharon and Charles Houy