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D.C. ZONING

Mr. Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20001

Re: BZA Application No. 16970

June 12, 2003

Dear Chairman Griffis and Members of the Board,

I am writing to express my support of NCRC in their effort to expand and specifically to register support for DDOT's proposal to make Highland Place a one-way street.

While there are no records of any traffic accidents on Highland Place, opponents to the school's plans have raised the issue of safety and school traffic, particularly with respect to the potential for danger that eastbound cars face when they come up against NCRC's westbound drop-off and pick-up queue. It is clear that the only viable solution is to create one-way traffic on the street so that there is never an instance when two cars might meet head on.

The school traffic already operates in a one-way pattern. School officials in orange vests are posted in the vicinity of the school directing cars to go eastbound on Newark Street and to drive up Highland Place only in the westbound direction. After dropping children off in front of NCRC, cars then turn left on 33rd place and then either go right or left on Newark Street. Since the safety of every resident and student is at stake then it doesn't seem like too much to ask residents of Highland Place to follow that same traffic pattern. Especially since it would eliminate the primary safety concern they have raised.

Another solution might be to cut into the front yards on Highland Place to create a wider street as well as some much-needed sidewalks, but of course this would come at a much greater expense to both residents and the District.

BZA
Case No. 16970
Exhibit No. 198

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.198

Yet another solution to the safety issues raised by NCRC's opponents would be a regulatory one. The Department of Transportation could create spaces along the entire frontage of the school that would be designated as no-parking during school hours. This would create enough curbside spaces to accommodate the drop-off and pick-up queue, particularly since the school has already offered to stagger arrival and dismissal times. Without the queue forming in the westbound traffic lane, less potential danger would arise. If there were ever a time when too many cars arrived to queue, the off-duty police officer that NCRC has proposed hiring would manage the traffic to ensure the safety of any oncoming cars.

This solution seems viable, especially because NCRC is committed to enforcing a strong, new traffic management plan. Of course, it does not ensure the complete resolution of safety issues. For example, when the Cleveland Park Club Camp is in session during the summer months, they direct their families to drive eastbound on Highland Place after dropping off their children at the intersection of Highland and 33rd Place. With two institutions asking cars to head in opposite directions on a small street, it is possible that no uniformed guard or strong traffic management plan is enough to ensure safety.

For this reason, we urge you to seriously consider this one-way solution. The issue is clearly not whether NCRC adds ten new children to their program. The issue is the safety of the residents, school children and the Cleveland Park Club members that use this street now. The solution has nothing to do with enrollment numbers, the solution is to make this narrow, winding street safe for everyone who uses it—today and in the future. Making Highland Place one-way will do that.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Claire Bloch & John Nielsen

cc: Ken Laden, Department of Transportation