BZA No. 16970
November 4, 2003

TESTIMONY OF STEVE HUNSICKER AS PARTY IN OPPOSITION

My name is Steve Hunsicker. I have lived at 3083 Ordway St., directly across from the entrance to NCRC, for approximately 15 years. I would like to address three subjects: First, the significant and dangerous traffic impacts that NCRC already places on nearby Ordway residents; second, two faulty elements of NCRC's latest traffic mitigation plan. These elements are (1) NCRC's plan to restrict weekday on-street parking along NCRC's Highland frontage to NCRC use only, thereby denying Highland Place residents access to needed parking near their homes; and (2) NCRC's plan to direct additional NCRC-related traffic onto Ordway St. without regard to the dangerous conditions that already exist on Ordway. The third subject that I will address are adverse impacts imposed on Ordway that are not traffic related.

My first subject is the traffic impact that NCRC already imposes on the neighborhood. I agree with the testimony of police Lt. Rock, the adverse traffic impacts shown by the Beckners' video are typical of those routinely experienced by the neighborhood around NCRC in general, and on Ordway St. in particular. Against this evidence, NCRC claims that it has faithfully implemented an effective traffic mitigation plan as required by the 1998 special exception. To

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the contrary, based on my observations, I can tell you that NCRC virtually ignored traffic requirements of the 1998 order with respect to Ordway Street until NCRC recognized that it would be back before the BZA in this proceeding seeking approval of its expansion plan. Since 1998, I have observed that these dangerous, adverse traffic impacts have gotten worse, not better. I know of many traffic accidents that caused property damage, and injury to neighbors' pets, in the immediate vicinity of NCRC's Ordway St. entrance. Fortunately, I have not observed a traffic accident involving a child, but I must tell you that I have come within an eyelash of pulling an unattended child from the path of moving rush hour traffic.

Surely, recognition of an existing dangerous condition should defeat a misguided expansion proposal – certainly NCRC does not carry its burden by the claim that to date the fear of a serious accident involving children has not occurred. To now hear NCRC's representatives characterize existing traffic congestion and children in the street as "traffic calming" strikes me as both hypocritical and irresponsible.

NCRC's traffic consultant seems to have gone to some length to avoid an assessment of significant problems that already exist: he avoided and did not

evaluate the dramatic increase in street parking on Ordway St. that occurs during NCRC's peak morning drop-off period; and he avoided and did not consider the vehicles in line on Highland during NCRC's peak mid-day pick-up and drop-off periods.

In addition to the Beckners' video, the traffic impacts experienced on Ordway on an ongoing basis are shown by the photos that I have distributed. These pictures were taken during the course of these proceedings when NCRC's traffic management efforts should have been most vigilant. I want to emphasize that the pictures show scenes that are commonly experienced on Ordway and which I have personally observed.

First: Because of the shortage of nearby on-street parking on Ordway, caused in large part by the unrestricted use of a long stretch of Ordway for parking by NCRC staff, care-givers and visitors commonly double-park on Ordway. Some even leave their vehicles unattended in the travel lanes. This is shown by the first picture, which shows an individual leaving her car unattended while she walks up to NCRC. Similar to the dangerous condition addressed by DDOT's February 5, 2003 Memorandum with respect to Highland

Place, such double-parking forces thru traffic into on-coming lanes of traffic, creating the dangerous potential for head-on collisions. The example shown in my picture occurred on March 18, 2003, and I have observed similar occurrences as recently as October of this year. This potential for dangerous double parking would only increase under NCRC's expansion plan and its plan to direct new traffic associated with its proposed expansion to Ordway St.

Second: Due to the scarcity of parking places on Ordway, large SUVs are routinely parked in no-parking zones or parked up to the edges of driveways, resulting in dangerous blind exits by neighbors trying to use their driveways. This is shown by the second picture. On occasion, driveways are completely blocked by vehicles parked by NCRC parents, visitors and staff. One example was shown on the Beckners' video, when an NCRC staff member's car completely blocked my driveway. NCRC traffic has been observed parking in the no-parking zone shown on the second picture as recently as the week of October 27, 2003.

Third: Because of narrow streets, and the increased size of SUVs favored by NCRC parents, vehicles park partially on neighbors' yards, resulting in severe damage to neighbors' property. This is shown by the third picture, which shows Henry Little's house and yard next door to NCRC on Ordway.

Fourth: Finally, NCRC parents and caretakers using the Ordway entrance routinely arrive by vehicle from the west and leave to the west, presumably to return to homes or proceed to work via 34th Street. Consequently, NCRC vehicles constantly turn around in neighbor driveways, causing dangerous blockage of two-way traffic and traffic congestion at peak times of rush-hour traffic and damage to neighbor property.

These adverse impacts add up to a currently existing, dangerous situation that NCRC simply has failed to remedy. NCRC and its supporters have made a misleading and weak effort to discredit our traffic studies. John Thoren for Friends of NCRC argued that our count of walkers did not include certain kids that he said walk to NCRC, including his own. But what he did not state was that at least some of the children he mentioned were apparently not even enrolled at NCRC in the

spring of 2002 when the traffic work was conducted. In particular, I confirmed that John Thoren and his children were not listed in the 2001-2002 NCRC school directory. It is my understanding that John's children were enrolled at NCRC no earlier than the fall 2002, after our traffic survey was conducted.

My second subject addresses two elements of NCRC's TMP that NCRC claims will remedy existing problems of traffic congestion and allow NCRC to bring even greater populations of children, teachers and visitors into the neighborhood.

First, NCRC proposes to have its frontage along Highland restricted parking for school use only during weekdays in an effort to eliminate the dangerous double-parking queue that now routinely exists on Highland. This area is marked as "A" on the NCRC site plan that I have distributed. There are at least two problems with this element: (1) It would only add room for a few vehicles and thus would not eliminate the dangerous queue line that now commonly exceeds ten vehicles; (2) it takes needed parking from Highland residents in this area. These residents share driveways with neighbors or have no driveways at all and thus rely on access to onstreet parking along this frontage.

Second, NCRC's proposal to direct additional traffic onto Ordway after its expansion is complete is no solution. The DDOT's February 5 report notes significant physical limitations to reliance on NCRC's Ordway entrance. As DDOT noted, on Ordway "there is no sidewalk along the southern curb and due to steep grade restrictions NCRC cannot provide a dedicated drop-off area in this area." Indeed, there are no sidewalks along the southern boundary of the NCRC frontage and the small front yards of several houses all the way west to 34th St. Consequently, every day children continually walk in and across busy Ordway Street to and from parked vehicles and the NCRC entrance. This is very dangerous due to the heavy commuter traffic during rush-hour periods and because parked cars block the views of children and traffic from neighbors as they exit their driveways, as I previously explained. This situation would only be made worse by directing more traffic onto Ordway.

NCRC has cited the prospects for improvements to Ordway St. as justifying greater reliance on NCRC's Ordway Street entrance. But as indicated by the DDOT report, the steep grade on NCRC down to Ordway referenced by DDOT's February 5 report makes infeasible a sidewalk along most of NCRC's Ordway frontage, indicated as "B" on the site map, at least without an obtrusive

and expensive retaining wall. Even if a sidewalk were feasible, the area is now largely used for NCRC staff parking. The area could not be used as a drop-off area without displacing NCRC staff parking to other neighborhood street locations. A sidewalk may be feasible along the western end of the NCRC Ordway frontage where the grade is not so steep, west of the existing NCRC sidewalk down to Ordway in the very limited area marked as "C" on the site map. But this area also cannot be used as a drop-off area without eliminating needed on-street parking and without exacerbating the same kind of dangerous double-parking queue line that now routinely exists on Highland and already occurs on Ordway, as I have previously discussed. In short, whatever work is ultimately scheduled for Ordway, NCRC's back door on Ordway is already unsafe, it will not safely accommodate increased usage by NCRC and the mere prospect of some improvements to the street provides no responsible basis for approval of NCRC's desired expansion.

My third subject are the adverse impacts that would be imposed on Ordway that are not traffic related. I will briefly list four:

First: The extensive construction now proposed by NCRC on its steeply sloped site down to Ordway likely will cause damage to nearby houses and exacerbate muddy run-off following heavy rainfall. These

problems have been experienced on Ordway since NCRC's unauthorized construction project in 1994. Indeed, our street is sometimes referred to by residents as "Rio Ordway," and often features miniature mudbars and small piles of driftwood after heavy rainfalls similar to those experienced along real rivers. Based on our experiences following NCRC's construction project in 1994, I fully expect that these problems would be exacerbated by the extensive construction and soil displacement contemplated by NCRC on its steeply sloped site. I fear that the adverse drainage situation that we already experience would be made much worse, on a permanent basis, if NCRC is permitted to construct a substantially expanded campus on its slope down to Ordway.

Second: Second, NCRC proposes to operate its expanded commercial facilities to as late as 11pm in the evening for undefined and unlimited "school-related" events. The noise, lighting pollution and traffic congestion associated with these operations would degrade the residential character of the neighborhood and would significantly diminish the use and enjoyment of our nearby homes.

Third: NCRC's proposed construction would create a visual wall of institutional construction along Ordway St., depriving the community of existing views of wooded open space. Construction also would eliminate many mature trees and permanent landscaping that NCRC installed along Ordway Street in an agreement reached between NCRC and its Ordway St. neighbors in 1994. That agreement resolved disputes that arose during NRC's last major construction project, during which NCRC renovated its carriage house by adding new windows and doors, removed many mature trees and put concrete down on much of its playground, all without benefit of necessary regulatory permits. NCRC now simply ignores that earlier agreement and would destroy the landscaping it installed along Ordway as part of the 1994 agreement with Ordway residents. In addition, NCRC now seeks to justify its current construction proposal by citing the windows and doors it added to the carriage house in 1994 as unsuitable under NCRC's current vision of its mission.

Fourth: The new institutional building that NCRC proposes would be much larger than neighboring houses and would permanently change the

character of this site in the heart of the Cleveland Park Historical District from residential to institutional. Others have addressed this subject in more detail and I will adopt their statements in the interest of time.

The overall conclusion is inescapable. This neighborhood and its narrow streets can only accommodate an NCRC that is of a limited size without experiencing excessive and dangerous adverse impacts. That limit has already been reached and exceeded. NCRC would irresponsibly increase these adverse and even dangerous impacts if its expansion proposal is approved. I therefore respectfully urge that the BZA deny NCRC's pending application.

Exhibits to Testimony of Steven R. Hunsicker

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DANGEROUS DOUBLE-PARKING ON ORDWAY ST.

1. DOUBLE-PARKING ON ORDWAY ST. CAUSES THE SAME DANGEROUS CONDITIONS THAT THE FEBRUARY 5, 2003 DDOT MEMORANDUM RECOGNIZES AS OCCURRING ON HIGHLAND PLACE. EAST-BOUND TRAFFIC MUST USE THE WEST-BOUND LAND TO AVOID DOUBLE-PARKED VEHICLES, CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEAD-ON COLLISIONS WITH WEST-BOUND TRAFFIC.

2. THE PROPOSED NEW CONSTRUCTION, AND SUBSEQUENT INCREASES OF NCRC STAFF, ENROLLMENT AND VEHICULAR VOLUME, WILL FURTHER INCREASE THESE DANGEROUS AND OBJECTIONABLE TRAFFIC CONDITIONS ON ORDWAY ST., AS WOULD ANY EFFORT TO DIRECT TRAFFIC ASSOCIATED WITH NCRC's PROPOSED EXPANSION TO ORDWAY ST.



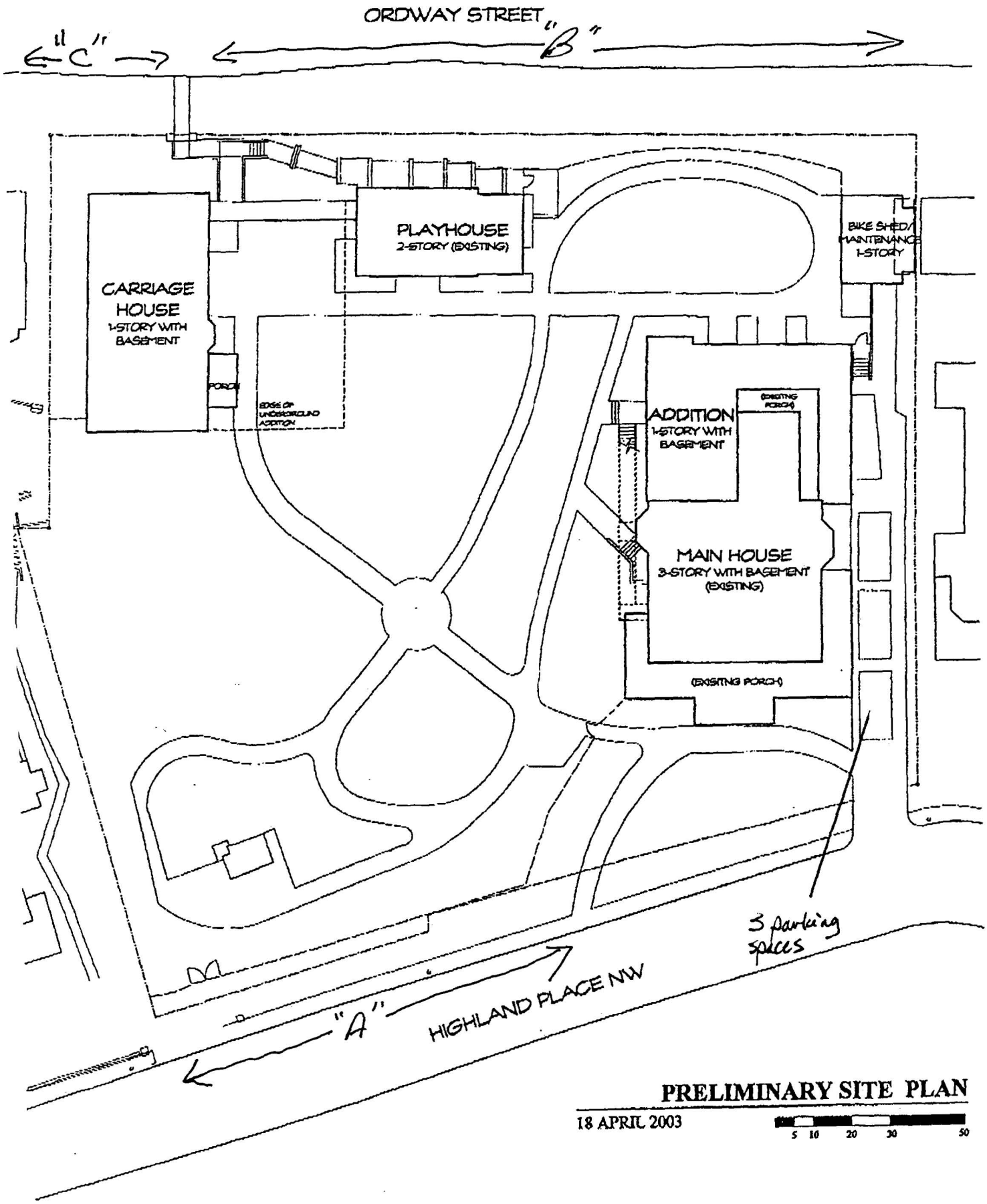
VEHICLES ILLEGALLY PARKED ALONG NORTH SIDE OF ORDWAY ST.

1. ILLEGALLY PARKED VEHICLES ARE COMMON.
2. INADEQUATE ROOM FOR LEGAL PARKING BETWEEN DRIVEWAYS; ILLEGAL PARKING CAUSES DANGEROUS BLIND SPOTS.
3. WHEN LARGE VEHICLES PARK ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STREET THERE IS NO ROOM FOR TWO-WAY TRAFFIC. DANGEROUS FOR PEDESTRIANS, MANY OF WHOM WALK IN THE STREET BECAUSE THERE IS NO SIDEWALK ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF ORDWAY, AND REPEATED INSTANCES OF DAMAGE TO PARKED CARS.



VIEW OF NCRC OPEN SPACE FROM ORDWAY ST.

1. EXISTING ORDWAY STREETSCAPE--OPEN GREEN SPACE--WOULD BE REPLACED BY A MASSIVE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE. ALL OPEN SPACE LOST FROM VIEW.
2. BECAUSE OF NARROW STREET, VEHICLES ALREADY PARK PARTIALLY ON NEIGHBOR YARDS (SEE DAMAGED TREE ROOTS), CAUSING DAMAGE TO NEIGHBORS' PROPERTY.
3. PLACEMENT OF CONES AT EDGES OF DRIVEWAY SHOWS VEHICLES ARE JAMMED INTO THE AVAILABLE SPACE--RESULTS IN DANGEROUS BLIND EXITS FROM DRIVEWAYS.



PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN

18 APRIL 2003

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