NCRC

Cleveland Park Neighbors' Statements in Opposition to the Planned NCRC Expansion, Volume II

1. **Gregory B. Craig – Highland Place**
2. **Robert L. Stern – Newark Street**
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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.316A2

September 30, 2002

Ms. Nancy MacWood, Chair
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3-C
2737 Devonshire Place, NW
Washington, D.C.

Re: **NCRC Plan to Expand**

Dear Ms. MacWood:

I am a Cleveland Park neighbor who is critical of NCRC's proposed plan to expand its facilities and to increase the population that uses that facility in the future. I attended the ANC meeting that dealt with this subject last Monday evening (September 23). I did not speak, but I have thoughts about some of NCRC's arguments that I would like to share with the Commissioners.

Argument #1: The ARC concluded that the design of NCRC's proposed new structures are perfectly consistent with the historical character of the neighborhood.

When considering whether the NCRC proposal is historically appropriate, the ANC should not limit its analysis to whether the bricks, windows, roofs and porches of the proposal fit in -- visually and physically -- with the rest of the neighborhood. The ANC's role should not be limited to that of an appellate court reviewing the narrowly-based judgments of the Architectural Review Committee. There are many other factors to take into account when considering the history of the neighborhood.

Because of the sheer magnitude of the NCRC proposal and because such a major expansion will necessarily have an impact on the character of the surrounding neighborhood, the issue of whether the NCRC proposed new buildings are historically appropriate does not lend itself to traditional ARC-style analysis. In other words, the ANC's historical analysis should not be limited to, e.g., whether the additions "look" as if they belong in the neighborhood; whether the new windows, doors, porches and roofs have been designed to appear as if they were built in 1895; 1905 whether the new structures are visually consistent with the other houses in the neighborhood. These questions are always important of course and can be dispositive. In this case, however, the size of the proposed expansion of the

institution carries serious implications for the historical character of the neighborhood.

Put another way: If NCRC were proposing to sell off a corner of its lot to allow a new 6000 square foot stand-alone residence to be constructed on that location, that would be one thing. But NCRC's proposal is to double the size of its physical plant. This kind of institutional expansion, occurring in the heart of one of the most historically significant and interesting neighborhoods in the District of Columbia, is inconsistent with that neighborhood's history and will have an adverse affect on that neighborhood. For that reason, I believe that the ANC should consider whether such a dramatic expansion of what began as a small neighborhood pre-school is so inconsistent with the history of the place and is so out of scale with the rest of the neighborhood that the proposal flunks the history test as well as the zoning test.

I presume that the founders of NCRC, when it first began some seventy-five years ago, had to approach the D.C. regulatory authorities of the time and had to seek permission to use a residence as a school in what otherwise would be an exclusively residential neighborhood. The variance that was granted at that time was probably based on the consideration that NCRC would be small, and that it would, with few exceptions, serve the families living in the neighborhood. I can hear the argument:

> "This kind of an institution – a small neighborhood school – will enhance this special residential neighborhood. It will not detract from it or damage it. And given the fact that the school will be small and filled with children from the neighborhood, using a residence in this fashion will not be out of character with the history of this most beautiful part of Cleveland Park."

One can fairly assume, I think, that, had the D.C. regulatory authorities of that time been confronted with a proposal to have a facility of 18,000 square feet serving over 180 students and 25 staff members, those authorities would have rejected the proposal on historical as well as zoning grounds – even if the architecture was impeccable. There is little doubt that, seventy five years ago, the regulatory authorities would have concluded that such a proposed use of the property is completely inconsistent with the historical character of what, up until that time, had been an exclusively residential neighborhood.[1] It is fair to assume that NCRC was given its original variance based on the assumption that, given its location in the middle of a block in the heart of Cleveland Park, NCRC would and could never be anything more than a "small neighborhood school."

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[1] It should be remembered that almost twenty five percent of the student body comes from outside the District, meaning that 45 NCRC students commute to the school from Maryland and Virginia. Most of the students who attend NCRC are driven to school.

Of course, this analysis is fully supported by what happened in 1963 when the DC authorities rejected NCRC's plan to expand the student body to a population significantly smaller than the current population. And it also explains why NCRC appears not to have been fully forthcoming with the DC authorities in 1998 as to the actual number of people – students in the morning and students in the afternoon and teachers and staff – using the facility every day.

My only point is that the NCRC proposal under consideration simply does not lend itself to the traditional bifurcated analysis: i.e., first, let's look at the way the building appears to see if it fits in visually with the historical character of the neighborhood; then, let's look at the use and zoning issues. With respect to the NCRC proposal, it is the magnitude of the proposed new facilities and functions -- 9000 square feet of new building space plus twenty new bodies coming and going -- that will damage the historical character of this small but precious slice of Cleveland Park.

Argument #2: NCRC is an excellent institution, and it must be allowed to pursue its mission.

This argument, in particular, irritates the Cleveland Park neighbors because there is no group of people that is more committed to excellence in education than this group. The argument is laden with emotion, and it has no logical content. No one begrudges NCRC's desire to improve its physical plant. No one is against NCRC building a room where faculty can meet without being bothered. No one wants to deny children the right to run around inside. All that -- and more -- can be accomplished without adding 9000 square feet to the physical plant or increasing the enrollment. NCRC wrote the specs for the expansion, and those specs describe a facility that would serve at least an additional 36 students and a dozen new teachers and supporting staff. There is nothing about NCRC's mission that requires it to educate 200 students as opposed to 120 students. I know of no evidence to suggest a smaller population of pre-school students is necessarily less excellent than a large population. There is overwhelming evidence that an over-sized population – in these circumstances – will do and already does enormous damage to the surrounding neighborhood.

Argument #3: NCRC has leaned over backwards to meet with the neighbors and to scale back its proposal

It is true that the architectural plans that NCRC presented to the ANC on Wednesday night are considerably more modest than the plans that were originally presented to the neighborhood last February. And the NCRC is to be congratulated for recognizing – after learning about the intense opposition within the neighborhood – that those original plans were so outlandish as to be wholly

indefensible. It is also true that, with respect to NCRC's proposed increase of students and staff, NCRC has reduced that proposed increase on different occasions (maybe more). According to my recollection, NCRC's originally proposed an increase of nineteen additional students and a dozen staff. NCRC later reduced that proposal to fifteen. During NCRC's presentation to the ARC on September 18, NCRC further reduced its proposal thirteen. When addressing the ANC on September 23, NCRC said it was now only proposing an increase of ten students.[2] It is true that NCRC"s most recent position represents a reduction of almost fifty percent in the size of its proposed expansion in enrollment. [3]

There are, however, two things to be said about the issue of enrollment:

First, many of us believe that the size of the population using the NCRC facility is already too great, and that NCRC grew to its current size by pulling the wool over the eyes of the regulatory authorities. Many of us believe, along with Andrew Hamilton, that the path to true excellence at NCRC would be to reduce, not increase, the size of the population using the facility. Many of us believe that, if NCRC truly believes that the ideal size of a pre-school is larger than the 171 students currently using the NCRC facility, NCRC should go somewhere else.

Second, many of us believe that the total size of the population that comes into the neighborhood -- every morning and every afternoon -- to use the NCRC facility is the single most important issue in this whole dispute. Certain neighbors communicated this specific concern to NCRC early on in the process. Moreover, these same neighbors told NCRC that, <u>if NCRC would agree to a legally enforceable cap on the student/teacher population at the current level</u>, these parents would find a way to support renovation of NCRC's facility.

That proposal was rejected. Many neighbors believe that NCRC has ambitiouis plans to increase the size of the student/teacher/staff population, and that the ultimate increase will be considerably more than NCRC acknowledged at the ANC meeting on Wednesday night. It may not be next year. It may not be the following year. But increasing the student population – and the revenue base -- is the objective.

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[2] It is simply untrue to claim that NCRC has been consistent in the size of its proposed increase to the student enrollment, that the number has "always" been ten.

[3] The rationale has always been the same: i.e., that NCRC needs to reduce the size of its existing classes but then needs to fill out the two new classes with new students.

Argument #4 The traffic congestion on Highland Place is only twenty minutes in the morning and twenty minutes in the middle of the day.

My understanding is that this claim is inaccurate, that traffic to the school begins – for "the early-birds" – well before the school day begins at 8:30 a.m, and that traffic from the school continues – for departing teachers and staff – well after the school day ends at 3:30 p.m. There is total gridlock at the peak hours, and the peak hours are increasing -- in the length of time that the gridlock blocks the street, and in the frequency of gridlock during the day.

Simply put, there are too many people coming and going from NCRC currently. No matter how conscientious NCRC may be in its efforts to manage the traffic, the neighborhood cannot handle the population of commuters. No matter how energetic NCRC may be in its efforts to enforce basic traffic rules for drop-off and pick-up, there will always be some who violate those rules.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views.

Sincerely yours,

Gregory B. Craig

Robert L. Stern
3218 Newark Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008

September 21, 2002

Ms. Nancy MacWood
Chair
Advisory Neighborhood Committee 3-C
3417 Woodley Road, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Ms MacWood:

A Crown Jewel of Cleveland Park Turns into an Abscess

For many years, there was a kinder, gentler NCRC here: a lovely, skilled preschool that was comfortably integrated in the Historic District of Cleveland Park and served that population. The school was one of the attractions for moving into and staying in our neighborhood. My wife, four children and I have lived here for 39 years in total, at the current address and previously on Highland Place.

Over the last decade or more, NCRC distanced itself further and further from the neighborhood. NCRC's clientele today is parents and children from all over DC and environs. Now, less than 10% of those served are from within our Historic District.

At a public meeting, hosted by NCRC in February of 2002, NCRC made known to its neighbors, for the first time, its long term growth plan. Clearly, that plan had been evolving for months, if not years, but silently to us. The February meeting was the start of a series meetings that NCRC offered to its physical neighbors; each consisted of vague, imprecise, loose, even deceptive declarations of NCRC's growth intentions by its board members, staff executives, architects, planners and fund raisers. Only on the surface was there any display of concern for the interests and rights of its neighbors. Subtly, in the subsequent "meetings with the neighbors", there was a pervasive attitude expressed by the NCRC people along the lines: " yes, we know there may be inconveniences to you but we'll do what we can to

limit our impact on your street traffic, the remaining green space, the invasion of the privacy of your properties, new dangers to pedestrians, reduction of available street parking, concern about surface water flow, concern for external appearance of the new construction, a variety of encroachments on neighbors, traffic delays, etc., etc."

NCRC's GENERAL ATTITUDE WAS AND IS: OUR SCHOOL'S GROWTH IS CLEARLY FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHATEVER HAPPENS TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.

Probably, the most distressing aspect of this emerging threat to the quality of life in our neighborhood is the repeated waffling about the "new enrollment numbers." Recall that NCRC's occupancy was limited in 1998 to 120 students; somehow that has become construed as 168 students. Now, NCRC is proposing, first, a growth of 19 students and which was then pulled back to "15 or so." Teacher addition was proposed at 6, later revised to 5 plus 2 part-time teachers. Whatever dimensions of the growth plan are presented, no part STANDS STILL. Above ground, underground and so on -- no matter. Our attitude has evolved into: how can these NCRC people be trusted. AND NOW WE JUST DON'T TRUST THEM!

To summarize, a friendly, attractive jewel in our historic district has become an abscess, a foreign body, that has to be contained. WE RESPECTFULLY ASK FOR YOUR HELP IN CONTAINING AND CONSTRAINING NCRC.

Sincerely yours,



Robert L. Stern

2945 Newark Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

September 22, 2002

Dear NCRC:

I live along the path where your parent body travels to the School every morning. Since the 1980's, I have been aware of the increased traffic to NCRC. In recent years, the traffic is noticeable ~~is~~ speedier and greater in number. I noticed frequent running through the stop signs at Highland and Newark.

I frequently walk and use the facilities of the Cleveland Park Club. Four new buildings and further loss of trees will be detrimental to the quality of life to anyone using the Cleveland Park Club. Therefore, I am opposed to this building project.

Sincerely,

Patricia H. Svoboda

3318 Ordway Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008

September 22, 2002

Nancy MacWood, Chair
ANC-3C
2737 Devonshire Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Via e-mail: nmacwood@aol.com

Dear Ms. MacWood,

As an NCRC neighbor and Ordway Street resident for almost 19 years, I am writing in strong opposition to NCRC's expansion plans for several reasons.

Historic preservation: The construction of a new two-story classroom building, a new maintenance building, and a significant expansion of the historic house will diminish this very important element of our historic district. The reduction of mature trees and open space, begun by NCRC a decade ago, will further erode the character of our neighborhood.

Size: NCRC envisions almost doubling the size of their facilities (from 10,720 sq ft to 21,109 sq ft) to permit them to add at least 15 students to their current 168 student population. They have been unable to explain the necessity of this desired expansion of buildings and population to the satisfaction of our neighborhood. We have recently learned that they misrepresented their population to the BZA during their last appearance before this group. They have expanded to three sessions each day and we understand that additional evening programs are contemplated.

Traffic: Noise and congestion have increased, our driveways are more frequently blocked, students appear to be put in jeopardy as they are rushed to school, and those driving students to school seem less willing to be respectful of our neighborhood. The school's efforts to address these issues since they unveiled their expansion plans last February have been unsuccessful.

NCRC has become less responsive to our community during the past two decades. They have failed to keep commitments made to our neighborhood and our City. Alarmingly, they propose to grow from a school located in an historic house to one located on a campus. Please vote against this proposal.

Sincerely,

Marc Fetterman

cc John Welsh, via e-mail: oxbo@starpower.net

WILLIAM W. and KEL GINSBERG
382 LIVINGSTON STREET
NEW HAVEN, CT 06511

September 22, 2002

Ms. Nancy MacWood
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3-C
2737 Devonshire Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ms. MacWood:

We write to provide comments with respect to the consideration by ANC 3-C of matters pertaining to the proposed expansion of the facilities of the National Child Research Center on Highland Place and Ordway Street in Cleveland Park.

From June of 1994 until August of 2000, we owned and lived with our two children in the house at 3079 Ordway Street, NW, which is directly across Ordway Street from the rear of the NCRC facilities. During these six years, we dealt on two occasions with regulatory matters pertaining to NCRC's facilities. In addition, of course, as immediate neighbors we dealt on a daily basis with the presence of NCRC – its children, its administrators, its parking issues and its central physical presence at the heart of the neighborhood that we came to love.

When we moved to Washington, DC in the Summer of 1994, we were immediately confronted with construction: NCRC was building playground and deck improvements directly across the street from our new house. We were astonished to learn that the Ordway Street neighbors had had little communication from NCRC as to what was planned. As we got involved, we were even more astonished to learn that there had been no public process associated with the project because NCRC had neither applied for nor received any permits for the improvements then under construction.

A series of meetings between NCRC and the Ordway Street neighbors ensued, at the first of which an NCRC board member frankly acknowledged that the school had always thought of Highland Place as its neighborhood and had never even thought to consult the neighbors on Ordway Street as to its plans. At that time, faced with the need for permits for a project already constructed, NCRC was eager to make amends for this oversight. Indeed, NCRC subsequently agreed to all of the requests of the Ordway Street neighbors, and six immediate neighbors including ourselves eventually supported NCRC's permit applications before the Historic Preservation Review Board in December of 1994.

We recount this history in detail to illustrate a point that may be important to your consideration of the matters before you: in 1994, NCRC had no communication with and gave no consideration to the views of the Ordway Street neighbors until forced to do so by a public process that it had sought to avoid.

In 1997-8, NCRC did proactively seek to inform its neighbors when it sought a new Certificate of Occupancy. It was represented to us that this action was sought to conform NCRC's Certificate of Occupancy to its Child Care Permit, which had previously been issued for 120 children. We do not recall any meetings or other interaction with the neighbors at that time. NCRC did represent, by letter of April 8, 1998 (copy attached), that this new Certificate of Occupancy was "completely a paper matter and *in no way are we planning to increase the size of our facility*" (emphasis added). It is thus no surprise that NCRC's neighbors would today feel misled by the current proposal for a substantial expansion of the NCRC facilities.

We do recall, however, that in 1998 NCRC instituted changes to its parking procedures in an attempt to improve what had long been a dangerous and inconvenient situation on Ordway Street. We were pleased at this initiative, as during drop-off and pick-up we had not infrequently experienced traffic tie-ups on Ordway Street and cars blocking our driveway, and we had often witnessed children being loaded and unloaded in the middle of a busy street. Our recollection is, however, that these changes did little to improve a set of problems that persisted at least until we moved away in the Summer of 2000. We would urge that the ANC 3-C require that NCRC address the difficult NCRC-related traffic safety and parking issues on Ordway Street before giving any consideration to expansion of NCRC facilities.

Finally, we would like to address the larger issues before the ANC 3-C in this matter. In our six years there, we found the area of Cleveland Park in the immediate vicinity of NCRC to be a uniquely wonderful place to live. Its historic and residential character and its hilly and wooded landscape near but high above adjacent commercial areas made it so. To preserve this unique community requires a vigilant and careful balancing of new construction with historic buildings and of institutional expansion with residential uses. We would also urge the ANC 3-C to be very protective of the unique and potentially fragile character of Cleveland Park in your consideration of the appropriateness of the proposed NCRC expansion.

In summary, our view is that recent history demonstrates that NCRC has viewed the concerns of its Ordway Street neighbors as an afterthought, has provided assurances that have proven to be misleading and has failed to deal with important day-to-day neighborhood concerns. We request that the ANC 3-C consider this history as you consider the current NCRC applications pending before you.

With appreciation for your consideration of these perspectives,

Sincerely yours,

William W. Ginsberg

Ellen 'Kel' Ginsberg

3053 Ordway Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
October 18, 2002

Ms. Nancy MacWood, Chair
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3 – C
2737 Devonshire Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ms. MacWood:

Regarding the National Child Research Center (NCRC), 3053 Ordway Street, NW became the address of my parents and me, at age 7, – sixty years ago. My concern is that the NCRC and my neighborhood have yet to reach a mutual understanding on coexistence. Back to my pre-teen years, the number of students and the expansion of building on the property have always been an issue. In addition, tuition expenses were out of the reach of many of our neighbors when I was a child - as they remain today.

As I recollect it, the school has always pledged that there would be no expansion in our residential neighborhood. Still, the school has obviously expanded over my six decades here, always with promises of "this far and no further." It has reached the point that currently some school functionaries are said to have floated the idea of a "cap" on enrollment. Somewhere there must be a record of how often over the years these "caps" have been proposed and then gotten around. Would the latest supposed "cap" be the last before my hundredth birthday? Having watched school buildings and enrollment grow to their present state in my neighborhood, I'm skeptical.

Parking problems are already critical in the general neighborhood and could later worsen to the point that even emergency vehicles could have difficult access. There are other problems that NCRC's latest proposed expansion presents both to our neighborhood and the School's children. As proposed, it would allow for less usable space in fresh air for the children to play, (some would be relegated to below ground without sunlight) and, in one version, it would add a large structure that would not fit in with houses on Ordway Street because of its size and institutional grotesquery. Trees already cut down on Ordway Street- which were supposed to have been replaced- would be joined by those to be displaced by such a building.

NCRC is a good school and while I value it as such, I am absolutely opposed to any larger enrollment for it, any new structure on it, including any grandiose "convention venue" within it, having watched Topsy grow as it has over my past sixty years ~~decades~~ across the street from it.

Sincerely,

Joann C. McLaughlin (202) 362-3053 (home)

Stuart M. Sotsky MD
3067 Ordway Street NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 966-5552
dcdoc@verizon.net

September 22, 2002

Ms. Nancy MacWood,
Chairman of ANC 3C
2737 Devonshire Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008

RE: Proposed NCRC Expansion

Dear Ms. MacWood:

I have owned and lived in the house at 3067 Ordway Street NW since 1992, directly across the street from the main building of the National Child Research Center (NCRC). I am writing you to express my strong opposition to the proposed expansion of NCRC enrollment, staff, and facilities, as initially announced in February 2002 and subsequently revised in presentations by the Center. While NCRC has been a valuable, esteemed and long-established school in the Cleveland Park neighborhood, historically serving the pre-school needs of the neighborhood children, the current school board and director have re-defined an expansive mission for the institution as a regional model center, primarily serving children outside the neighborhood and exceeding the carrying capacity of this historic neighborhood to absorb the density of people, buildings, traffic and activities without destructive consequences to its unique character.

The NCRC proposal would result in the construction of two large institutional buildings with connecting walls and a major northward expansion of the main Victorian residential building, that are out of scale in this residential community and present a massive presence on the streetscape on Ordway Street. One of the buildings would be a garage structure with maintenance equipment and functions directly facing on Ordway Street. The expansion would also threaten the open green space that was a factor in the original historic designation of this neighborhood because of its natural beauty and the preservation of original forested land on residential property between branches of Rock Creek Park. I ask that the ANC reject the planned expansion of NCRC as proposed and the

the Historic Preservation Review Board subject the NCRC proposal to no less stringent criteria than those applied to other residential structures in the Cleveland Park Neighborhood. The proposed expansion would affect the residential environment of all the surrounding neighbors on Ordway Street, Highland Street, and 33rd Place and have a substantial impact on Newark and 34th Streets as well through increase in traffic and parking throughout the day.

Traffic, parking and safety have been an issue in the streets surrounding NCRC for years, have become worse in the recent past, and would be expected to deteriorate further if the proposed expansion of enrollment, staffing, activities and facilities were allowed. The current level and speed of traffic along with the concentration of parkers loading and unloading of children with inadequate staff supervision on a substandard street without adequate curbs, sidewalks, crosswalks or signs represents a dangerous situation. Property damage to cars, drives, and walls of surrounding neighbors is already a regular occurrence. The efforts of the school administration to address these problems have been inadequate and short-lived. These problems occur not only on weekdays through the school year, but in the evenings for various meetings, on weekend for private parties for school patrons, and during the summer when the school runs a camp program. I have attached a proposal to the NCRC board for their support that I presented at a meeting with DC government representatives earlier this year.

The NCRC has provided various explanations for their perceived need for expansion of enrollment and facilities, including safety of the children and comfort of the staff, the necessity of which is questionable given that the school has operated in its current facilities comfortably and safely for over seventy years. NCRC currently enrolls approximately 168 students and has 37 staff, but has a certificate of occupancy for only 120. It proposes now to expand by an additional 15 student and 6 staff after vociferous objection in several community meetings to even larger expansion. The impact is even greater since so few students now live in the neighborhood and therefore walk to the school, so that the traffic increase is magnified beyond the simple enrollment numbers. If the current space is too small for the current enrollment and staffing, it is not sensible to increase enrollment and staffing, then nearly double the floor space, and expect that future school boards and directors will not need and wish to further increase enrollment to finance this large expansion.

In the process of proposing this expansion, the board and director have heard but apparently only partly listened to the deep concerns and strong objections of the majority of Cleveland Park neighbors,

particularly those in the immediate vicinity of the school, that the expansion would have a deleterious effect on this unique historic neighborhood. If NCRC wishes to remain in Cleveland Park, it must accommodate the limits of the historic residential character of the neighborhood. If it feels that expansion of enrollment, staffing and facilities are essential for their desired programs, it should seek a more suitable site that can accommodate those desires.

There has been a regrettable pattern of disregard by NCRC of its neighbors and the laws and regulations of the District of Columbia over the years. In 1994 NCRC proceeded without HPRB approval or appropriate building and licensing permits and without discussion with the neighbors to cut down mature trees, build a new playground, alter the historic carriage house and build a large concrete deck and unsightly chain link fence. Construction noise, dirt and traffic were a burden throughout the summer, including some weekends, and continued until someone obtained a stop work order. At that point the school authorities met to reach some agreement over the work and landscaping with some neighbors. In 1998 NCRC was disingenuous in representing to the Board of Zoning Adjustment and to the neighbors that they had no intention of increasing enrollment or building new facilities. Yet within approximately one year, NCRC began its strategic planning process that within only 4 years violated their own commitment to the neighborhood and the government. While NCRC has presented architectural drawings at several community meetings they have not been fully forthcoming in writing with regard to the dimensions and size of proposed building expansion. Now they say they do not have a specific plan but want agreement on the concept in development. I believe that the ANC and HPRB should carefully review NCRC compliance with previous agreements with the city and the neighbors, as well as any covenants on the deed to the property, before approving any further development or expansion of enrollment. There certainly should be no agreement to any development which does not contain a firm written covenant that would limit further growth of NCRC since the board and director change and do not appear to act as though they feel bound by the agreements of past school authorities.

Sincerely,

Stuart Sotsky

Stuart Sotsky MD
3067 Ordway Street NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 966-5552

Rives Fowlkes Carroll
3405 Ashley Terrace, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

October 26, 2002

To: ANC 3C Commissioners

By now you have heard many concerns from neighbors about the proposed physical expansion and enrollment increase at National Child Research Center. I am adding my point of view as of one of the six founding members of the CPHS in1986, as a tour guide of the historic Cleveland Park neighborhood for the Smithsonian, and as a neighbor who lives near NCRC.

I have lived in Cleveland Park for 28 years, 18 on Ordway Street and 10 on Ashley Terrace, so my family and I have been in close proximity to NCRC for nearly three decades. Our children enjoyed playing and going to camp there. NCRC has graciously opened their playground to neighbors.

My first experience with NCRC's negative impact on the neighborhood was with the lack of driver and pedestrian safety caused by the large number of cars, the long carpool line of idling cars, and the congestion, back-ups, and double-parking. This magnitude of traffic on such a small narrow residential street is dangerous. Several times a day, it makes the street a one-way-only street, as there is not enough width for two cars to pass. At times the double parking and idling make it impassable. This street isn't even wide enough for two full-width sidewalks. In fact, in front of the school, the limited width allows for a narrow sidewalk on only the school side of the street. Traffic, however, is only one of the concerns.

Another concern is a potentially more permanent disruption to the neighborhood. **Increasing the institutional nature of the NCRC property is incompatible with both the original plan of The Cleveland Park Land Company that created this historic neighborhood and with the intent of today's residential Historic District.**

I want to share some of the details and background I've learned about Cleveland Park and the house that is now NCRC. As you know, Highland Place is at the heart of the original suburb called Cleveland Park. This suburb was the first to be developed by John Sherman and his wife Ella Bennett Sherman beginning in 1895. Their company, The Cleveland Park Land Company, developed what was called the "Queen of Washington Suburbs" that consisted of Newark, Highland, Ashley Terrace, and the lower part of Macomb. The Shermans were capitalizing on the access to these hills made available by the streetcars that began to run on Connecticut and Wisconsin Avenues in 1890 and 1891. Because of the success of this streetcar suburb, the surrounding subdivisions, Oak View, Cleveland Heights, and Connecticut Avenue Highlands became known as Cleveland Park also.

John Sherman built not only houses, but with his paternalistic approach, he built a community. He built a meeting lodge and streetcar waiting room where our library is today. It burned one February night in 1912 as the Boy Scouts had not properly extinguished the fire in the fireplace. He built a police and fire station on Newark at the end of 33rd Place. Notice how unusual and decorative the remaining frame for the firebox at that corner still is today. And he built a stable. He planned to locate the stable on Ordway near Highland and 33rd Place, but the neighbors objected to the flies and odors, so it was constructed behind houses on lower Macomb.

Two of those neighbors were Bates and Lisette Warren, a lawyer and his wife, who lived at 3209 Highland Place, currently NCRC. Their house was the first brick house in Cleveland Park and the only one for a long time. Built by Hunter and Bell in 1905, it sold for $18,000. This Georgian Revival house was constructed with black glazed bricks typical of the James River houses before 1750 when the burning of hickory wood was made illegal in order to protect the disappearing hard wood trees. The black glaze was the result of the brick being close to the heat of a hickory wood fire. Bates Warren was interested in real estate and built the garden apartments on Porter Street, The Cleveland Park, in 1924-5 and the Tilden Gardens on Connecticut Avenue in 1927-30, both within our Historic District.

The building that houses NCRC was and is unique in the neighborhood. It was a home and sits amongst houses that are currently homes, with the single exception of the Cleveland Park Club. As an institution, NCRC has adapted well for many years to an old house and narrow residential streets. However, its institutional function and plans for growth are becoming incompatible with its quiet residential location. **It would be an avoidable mistake to increase the institutional appearance and size of the school by doubling its square footage and adding yet more people and cars**. In 1963, the school made a similar proposal that was rejected.

This street is not the right place for a large school that seems to continually want to grow. Highland Place was not built for carpool lines. In the 1800's it was the alternative route for horses and buggies that had to avoid the muddy and uneven ravine (what today we affectionately call "the dip") on a dirt path (now Newark Street) and therefore chose the high land.

I urge you to recommend against the NCRC proposal to increase their enrollment and enlarge their space that will destroy a valued piece of Washington's past and present.

Sincerely,

Rives Carroll

Susan B. Taylor
3301 Highland Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
(202) 244-7731

Dear ANC 3-C Commissioners: October 27, 2002

I live with my husband and two children at 3301 Highland Place, N.W., one house removed from NCRC. We oppose the school's plans to double the size of its buildings and increase its enrollment. I understand that the ANC will vote on the historic preservation aspect of NCRC's application at its Monday, October 28, meeting.

Friday I read through the entire application made by the Cleveland Park Historical Society in 1987 to designate Cleveland Park as a Historic District. The application, which was approved, spells out exactly why Cleveland Park's various characteristics are historic and demonstrates why a school campus on Highland Place will destroy the very elements that justified Cleveland Park's inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. I implore you to review the application.

Like Cleveland Park, there are several areas in Washington, D.C. that have beautiful structures and examples of great architecture. What distinguishes Cleveland Park, however, are three unique characteristics. All three of these characteristics help define our neighborhood's historic significance.

The first characteristic is the balance between commercial areas of hustle and bustle on Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues and peaceful pedestrian east/west streets.

" The atmosphere of the neighborhood has an old world charm reminding one of Washington's southern graciousness and the slower pace of life at the turn of the century. The hustle and bustle of human activity and cars along Connecticut and Wisconsin Avenues contrasts sharply with the feeling of peace and quiet which envelopes the pedestrian turning off the Avenues.....as one walks onto one of the East/west streets –Macomb, Newark, Ordway, Porter, Rodman – which connect the two avenues and constitute the heart of the Cleveland Park Historic District."(1987 Application; Section number 7, Page 3)

"The history of the two areas- the residential side streets and the main traffic arteries from the city-are inextricably linked." (1987 Application; Section number 8, page 8)

I recognize that a nursery school may not be thought of as a commercial enterprise. But I believe that the size, scope and *ambition* of NCRC will intrude on this neighborhood just as if it were. The traffic is already unmanageable. In its most recent annual report, NCRC states that it is hosting its "first annual early childhood education conference" at the school this November 8th. "Speakers from 30 schools all over the city will join NCRC teachers in providing over 15 workshops..." Floor plans distributed by their architect include a room that will seat 150 people. Adjacent to this room is a "chair closet" with double doors and storage for at least 150 chairs (attachment). NCRC clearly intends to become more than a school.

The second characteristic is the importance of houses and yards as part of the visual excitement of streetscape. As stated in the 1987 Application, "Certain design characteristics, established with the earliest houses on Newark Street and Highland Place, were repeated by subsequent architects and builders. The houses, small and large, are set back and often up above the street on generous lots of varying sizes and shapes." (1987 Application; Section number 7, page 2)

"Cleveland Park is a predominantly green neighborhood with large trees defining the streetscape. The houses are set back, and generally the ample front yards are not fenced; consequently, the houses and yards are part of the visual excitement of the streetscape. There are open spaces throughout the neighborhood created by the estates, the school, the playground, and the churchyard which provides more variety and more greenery.....This adds to the park-like quality of Cleveland Park which John Sherman was celebrating in his choice of a name." (1987 Application; Section number 7, page 8)

NCRC's proposed new construction will eliminate the open space streetscape along Ordway Street and replaced it with a wall. Most of the trees that were planted by the school in 1995 (after the school unlawfully felled so many when they renovated their playground) will, once again, be cut down and replaced by a building.

The third characteristic is the care that the early Cleveland Park developers took to maintain the natural contour of the land. "Periods of the history of Washington, DC are visually represented in Cleveland Park because of the original land forms with hills, curving roads, and landscaping as well as the architectural structures themselves and their relationships all of which have been maintained throughout the passage of time." (1987 Application; Section number 8, page 4) NCRC claims that a large section of its proposed new building is to be buried. But the lowest point of the roofline is 8 feet above grade. The hilly contour of NCRC's land will disappear and be replaced when that large building is partially covered with dirt and grass. The dirt and grass covered roof will flatten out completely the contour of the property

I understand that the Cleveland Park Historical Society has not opposed the project. But it seems to me that to restrict historic preservation issues to fenestration, building materials, and the scale of a proposed addition or new construction is wrong and in direct contrast to the very reasons that our neighborhood qualified for the National Register. The clear intent of the United States Department of the Interior in evaluating applications for areas to be designated as historic is to include criteria, such as the protection of *residential* areas, as important. In fact, the whole intent of preserving a neighborhood as historic is wrapped around the essence of community. The application even has a "Criteria C; Areas of Significance: Community Planning and Development and Architecture."

The adverse change to the historic character of *the blocks that are the single most significant in the Historic District* will be done so that a nursery school, which began as a small *neighborhood* school can expand its size and operations. The school says it needs to add children so that it can reduce the size of its classrooms. It says, despite the fact it has had roughly 168 children for ten years, it needs to build **9,000 square feet** to provide adequate physical space. It will eliminate an important streetscape view of greenery. It will destroy a hill. This expansion in enrollment, the construction of a new, purely institutional building, the creation of a campus, the expansion of the scope of services that NCRC provides; all of this definitely changes the historic character of this Historic District. The fact that *renovation* may be needed or desired cannot become a pretext for *expansion* into something significantly different from what the school has been. Please don't set this dangerous precedent for our treasured historic neighborhood. Please review the materials and vote against NCRC's application.

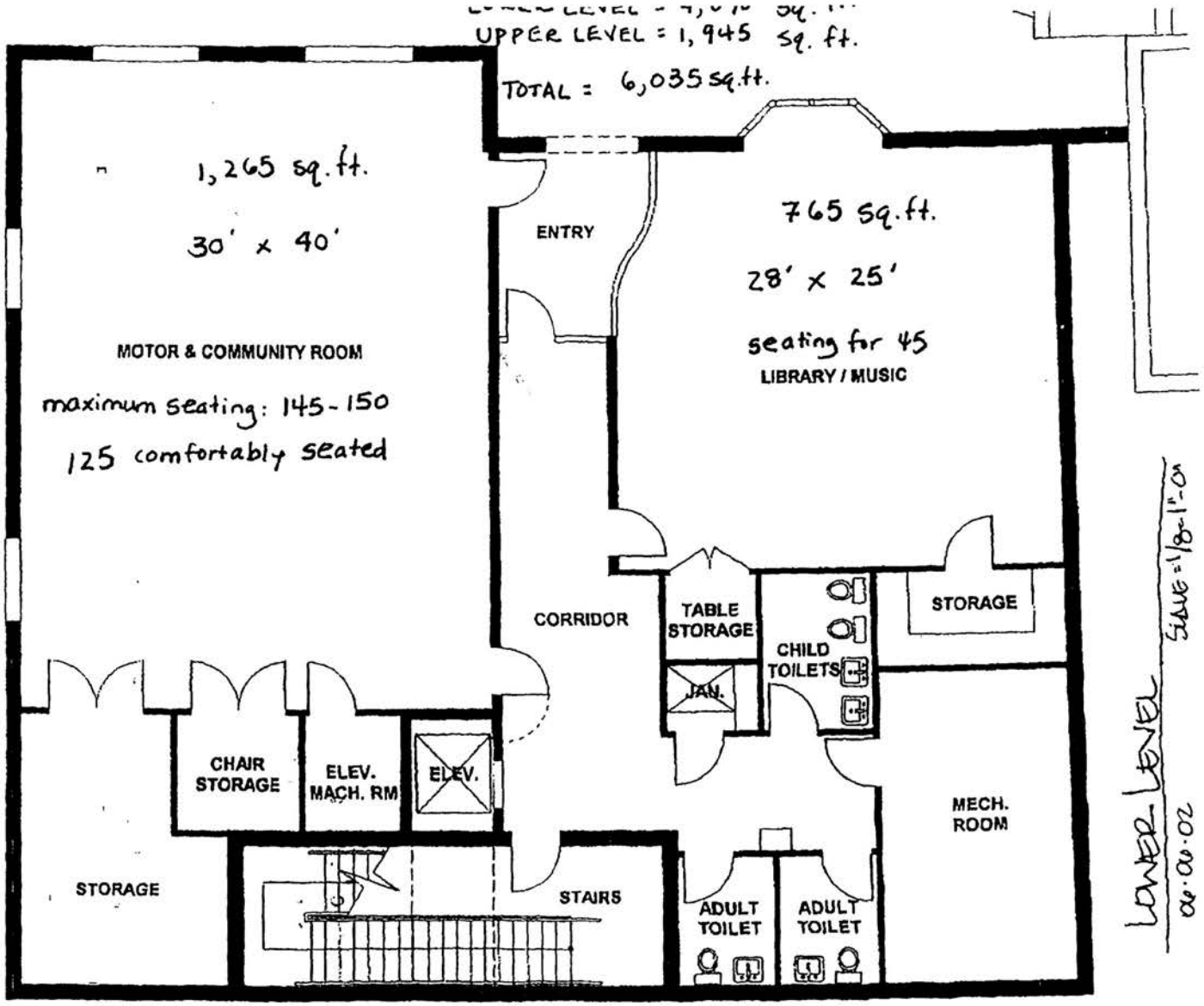
Very truly yours,

Susan B. Taylor

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Attachment



LOWER LEVEL

SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"

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