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Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA)
Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

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Subject: Application No. 17022
Edmund Burke School

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to provide you with my views in favor of Edmund Burke School's pending application for special exception required to build an addition at the corner of Upton Street and Connecticut Avenue. Due to a schedule conflict, I was unable to attend and provide testimony on July 15, 2003, the initial day of BZA hearings.

My family and I are ANC 3F area residents. I have been professionally involved in urban planning for close to 30 years. I am Senior Vice President for Policy and Practice at the Urban Land Institute, a member of the board of the Cleveland Park Historical Society, and have a B.A. majoring in Urban Studies (Case Western), and an M.C.P. in Urban Planning (Harvard). I keep up with neighborhood development issues and have followed the consideration of Burke's proposal. I am not a Burke parent and have no ties to the school or the project. My views are strictly those of an interested citizen and neighbor.

In my view, Burke's proposal to construct a building on the designated location is consistent with sound planning principles and its implementation would be a welcome addition to the neighborhood. It will contribute to the logical and attractive development of the Connecticut Avenue corridor while providing a number of benefits to adjoining and nearby neighborhoods, including in particular the neighborhood residential (R-2) properties on Upton Street. The parcel is well suited for the expansion of the school since if moves the activities of the school away from the lower density residential area in the direction of a higher-density area. I fully agree with the conclusion of the Office of Planning set forth in its memorandum dated July 8, 2003:

> "...the expansion of the Edmund Burke School at the proposed site would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zoning regulations and maps. This is especially the case given the site's location on one of the District's principal arterial streets, its adjacency to the

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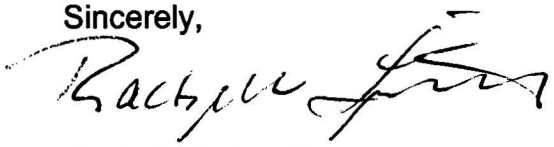
existing school buildings and its proximity to a Metro station. The proposed design orients the addition, and tends to re-orient the entire school, toward the high-density activity of Connecticut Avenue and not toward the residential neighborhood to the east. The proposed site is zoned for medium-high density residential and identified for high-density residential uses on the General Land Use Map.

The focus of concern of both the BZA and Burke neighbors is with traffic congestion and circulation generated by Burke. The school has offered to address this issue by adding 47 on-site parking spaces, off-street pick-up and drop-off using a school driveway, shuttle bus services to satellite sites, subsidy incentives for those using car pools and Metro, and a series of operational measures and enforcement mechanisms, with significant financial non-compliance penalties. Accepting the proposal would provide a useful precedent for addressing traffic problems with institutions like Burke. Although traffic is and always will be a problem in this type of neighborhood, the steps proposed by Burke will greatly reduce the problems; particularly if other institutions in the neighborhood followed suit.

I do not think that the July 1, 2003 ANC 3-F Report on Burke's application accurately represents its constituency (ANC 3-F area residents), as the report does not represent a balanced consideration of the issues. It sets forth the views of a few who strongly oppose the proposal while ignoring the many within ANC 3F who support the proposal: the report appears to suggest that the problem is not only with Burke's proposal but with the school's very existence in this neighborhood. In my view, Burke's proposal will not adversely affect the use of neighboring property, but will produce significant benefits for the neighboring property. Moreover, if the parcel were not used as proposed by the school, it is doubtful that report supporters would welcome any reasonable expected alternative uses of the parcel.

I strongly encourage you to approve the Edmund Burke School's application. As proposed, the new building and the traffic plan will serve the interests of the school and the neighborhood. I thank you for considering my views on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Rachelle L. Levitt

cc: Andrew Altman, Director, Office of Planning
Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia