

My children attend Lee Montessori. While we are all sorry to lose the expanse of greenspace in front of the school, which serves as a community gathering space and where our children play daily from 4-5:30, I always thought it would be nice for our school to be located in the middle of a neighborhood. Many schools are located in neighborhoods, and except for the 15 minutes surrounding drop off and pick up, the school and neighbors co-exist harmoniously. My own neighborhood, Brookland, has five such elementary schools: Bunker Hill, Burroughs, Shining Stars, Bethune, and Noyes.

Unfortunately, because the proposed neighborhood has private streets, we will not be able to co-exist harmoniously. We will not be able to drive or walk our children to school through the neighborhood streets. We know this because currently we are prohibited from walking or driving through the private streets of the Chancellor Row neighborhood that abuts our building. If this project is approved as proposed, we will be an isolated school building in the middle of a community that we are prohibited from moving through. Access will be very challenging, especially as our schools grow, but more important will be the sense of siege and suspicion our school community will experience daily.

And more important still, this is a racial issue. I am white, and when I sometimes walk with my children through the private streets of the Chancellor Row neighborhood to attend a weekend school event, I have been met with nothing but smiles and nods; this has not been the case for black parents at my school (Lee Montessori is 40% African American). These parents have been videotaped and had their images sent to our principal. This is simply unacceptable in D.C., a city invested in equality and integration. However, the creation of private streets means the creation of a gated community (without gates) in the heart of a city, and it has meant and will continue to mean the creation of racial profiling by home owners guarding who gets to walk or not walk on those streets.

Please do not approve the project with private streets.

Bess Fox and Jeremy Dodger, parents of Jane (5) and Wilgus (8) who attend Lee Montessori Public Charter School

Submitted on 4/24/2018 by:

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