

Mr. Frederick Hill, Chairman,
Board of Zoning Adjustment

Re. Case No. 20266

We urge the BZA to oppose this request, because it does not meet the standards for granting a special exception specified in Chapter 3, Section 703 and Chapter X, Section 901 of DC Municipal Regulations. Section 901 states that BZA may only grant an exception if it will not adversely affect use of neighborhood property, and that the applicant has the full burden to prove that there is no undue adverse impact. Section 703 requires an applicant to provide one or more reasons why a parking waiver should be granted, contrary to other regulations due to “shape or configuration of the site, proximity to transit or lack of demand for parking”.

We dispute the applicant’s assertion that it meets these requirements, for the following reasons:

The applicant’s claims are not supported by evidence

As a senior citizen and longtime Newark Street resident, I am writing to state that a waiver of existing parking requirements would cause serious adverse impact on ourselves, nearby Macklin residents, and small businesses in our commercial district, who already suffer from a severe dearth of parking. The developer proposes to add 30 apartment units and 4 large townhouses to the existing 17-unit Macklin, plus 2,700 square feet of new retail space (enough for 3 tenants) but provide no parking, and -- at the same time -- remove 15 existing parking spaces. This will result in 51 total Macklin housing units, with several times this number of residents, and double existing retail space. Yet the developer claims, based on its traffic study and other unsubstantiated assertions, that new residents will not have cars, that sufficient parking is available now, and that the project will cause

“minimal” parking problems for existing residents, Connecticut Ave. merchants, their patrons, new businesses or new residents.

There is insufficient parking availability now.

Please note that at the ANC’s July 6 Planning & Zoning Committee meeting, the developer’s parking consultant contradicted the developer’s parking study finding that there is current parking sufficiency. He said “there is very little (street) parking, if any; there are no parking spaces, to be frank”. Our Connecticut Ave. merchants historically have called lack of parking their most serious problem; this was confirmed in a 2016 parking study prepared for the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, in which 86% of these merchants identified lack of available parking as the most serious impediment to their business. The developer’s parking study was uncritically endorsed by DDOT without sufficient review, including failure to consider recent loss of 28 parking spaces in the service lane, which may become permanent.

There is no assurance that new residents won’t have cars .

The developer’s assertion that new tenants will not have cars e cars also was exploded by factual evidence at the July 6 ANC meeting. The developer had stated that only 1 of 17 current Macklin tenants have cars and that future tenants would favor a similar “car-free” lifestyle. However, Judge Jennifer Anderson, who lives directly across from the Macklin, testified that in fact, 6 or 7 current tenants have cars, and in the last few months she has observed that most new tenants have cars.

The developer’s claim that the project site prevents on-site parking ignored suggested, feasible options.

The developer maintains that physical constraints of the property prevent provision of on- site parking. However, its three studies documenting impossibility of potential parking options appear to

have been conducted to support such a pre-conclusion. No study was conducted of other potentially feasible parking options, such as reduction of project “amenities” or other project changes which might reduce its future profits.

The Developer Does Not Merit Further Parking Exemption Beyond the 50% Reduction Already Provided

The developer stresses proximity to Metro and other public transit to support a claim that there is no need to provide parking. Its Traffic Demand Program (TDM) contains commendable items to encourage residents’ use of public transit, but these items are aspirational, not enforceable. More than half of them promote increased bicycle use, which certainly will not be the exclusive transportation mode for many residents. It is unrealistic, and possibly age-discriminatory, to assert that all new residents will be young, active persons committed to a car-free lifestyle.

The only significant TDM provision is a commitment to prohibit residents from participating in the Resident Parking Program (RPP). But the Department of Transportation (DDOT) has stated that it doesn’t have authority to issue or enforce such a prohibition, and that residents will be eligible for the RPP program. Adding new Macklin residents to this program would have a severe adverse impact on nearby residents and businesses, particularly those like ourselves without off-street parking, who rely on RPP for limited space on Newark Street, with parking allowed on only one side of the street. Indeed, when we leave a parking space for daytime errands, we frequently must search for a parking place some distance from our house, because every available Newark St. space is occupied by patrons of our new vibrant library, Connecticut Ave. stores, various workmen and others. At night, finding parking is even more difficult.

We urge the Commission to consider our real-life parking situation, in contrast to what might be termed a “wishful tomorrow land” provided by the Macklin developer. We also request that you give greater consideration to nearby neighbors and businesses who will be most adversely affected, rather than to a well-organized group supporting this project and parking waiver as a step toward their vision of a future car-free, pedestrian oriented Cleveland Park, but who themselves will not suffer its adverse impact. (See their home addresses.)

We respectfully ask that you do not grant this request for a parking waiver.

Evelyn Idelson
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