

4815 V Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20007

Mr Frederick Hill  
Chairman  
District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment  
District of Columbia Office of Zoning  
441 Fourth Street, NW Suite 200S  
Washington, DC 20001

November 2, 2020

RE: BZA Case #20308

Dear Charmain Hill:

Over two years ago, my family and I moved to the Palisades neighborhood. We live at 4815 V St. NW, directly across the street from the R-1-B portion of 4865 MacArthur Boulevard in BZA Case #20308. For the past year, I have participated extensively in the community review process with Trammel Crow Company (Applicant) through the Palisades Citizens Association and the Advisory Neighborhood Commission. I have been actively involved in the discussions and negotiations regarding this development and the resulting Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and the Construction Management Agreement (CMA). As the informal representative of the surrounding neighbors, I advocated for the neighbors' concerns, many of which are addressed in both the MOA and the CMA. As such, I support the request of the ANC Chairman Chuck Elkins for the Board of Zoning Adjustments to incorporate the MOA and the CMA into its order on this case.

The neighborhood surrounding this development is a vibrant commercial and residential corridor that is burdened with several pedestrian safety issues, specifically:

1. The immediate community surrounding 4865 MacArthur Boulevard is not fully sidewalked, which means that residents, employees, and commercial patrons regularly walk in the street. This issue is compounded by the fact that the neighborhood is comprised of 15-20% seniors and the population of children in the neighborhood is growing. The Rock Creek West livability study recommended that sidewalks be installed along 48<sup>th</sup>, 49<sup>th</sup>, and V Streets.
2. The residential portion of the neighborhood suffers from "through-traffic" from MacArthur Boulevard and Foxhall Road where vehicles often pay no respect to the residential speed limits. In addition, because of the commercial nature of the MacArthur Boulevard, delivery trucks regularly use V Street to access their delivery stops.
3. Finally, the neighborhood lacks sufficient crosswalks and stop signs to ensure that pedestrians, particularly school children who attend neighboring schools and regularly use the library located on V street, are safe.

As an illustration of these concerns, in September 2019, I submitted requests for DDOT to review several of the intersections along V, 48<sup>th</sup>, and U Streets for pedestrian safety enhancements such as three-way stop signs, speed bumps, and high visibility crosswalks (#19-00881387 – high visibility crosswalk at the intersection of U Street and MacArthur Blvd NW and #19-00920833 – three way stop sign and/or speedbumps at the intersection of 48th Street and V Street, NW). To date, neither of my requests have been serviced or reviewed by the District. And, due to a clear shift of vehicular traffic that will occur

with this new development, the neighborhood's pedestrian safety challenges will be intensified by the development of 4865 MacArthur Boulevard.

The BZA requires that the Applicant demonstrate that their development *"is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring properties because of noise, traffic, or other objectionable conditions."* To meet this condition, the Applicant submitted research demonstrating that the new development will generate approximately 26 fewer trips than the previous use on the site. Because the new development has less curb cuts than the previous site, using the trip generation measurement delivers a false positive result in this case. The Zoning Board must recognize that while the number of trips generated from the site will decrease, the location of the traffic in and out of the site has materially changed. The previous site had three curb cuts – one on U Street, one on MacArthur Boulevard, and one on 48<sup>th</sup> Place. Now, the main point of entry for the site will be on 48<sup>th</sup> Place along with a secondary curb cut on V street. The new site effectively shifts the traffic away from the commercial thoroughfare of the neighborhood and substantially changes the traffic patterns towards the residential side of the site. In addition, the new lot on V Street is intended for general commercial corridor use. While the grocery store use has been factored into the trip generation measurement, the "general" commercial corridor use has not been factored in. The District Department of Transportation concluded that the *"location of the curb cut on V Street could attract commercial traffic into the residential neighborhood and create a new conflict point between vehicles and pedestrians."*

Additionally, Section 4(e) of the MOA recognizes this traffic impact and states:

4. *Traffic and Safety Improvements around the Perimeter of the Site: Developer recognizes that the changes to the Site, including the new curb cut on V Street will negatively impact traffic. As a result, Developer has agreed to pursue the following Traffic and Safety Improvements around the Perimeter of the Site in conjunction with the PCA and ANC, but subject to final approval by DDOT:*

- i. *Construct sidewalks, at Developer's expense, on the south side of V Street NW, from 48th Place to MacArthur Blvd. and from 48th Place to the curb cut to the proposed V Street parking lot.*
- ii. *Construct, at its expense, at the beginning of the construction, an extension of the sidewalk on the west side of 48th place up to V Street NW*
- iii. *Actively promote with the District Department of Transportation both in writing and orally the following safety improvements near the Project's site:*
  1. *Three-way stop signs and cross walks at V and 48th place, V and 49th Street, and V and 48th Street;*
  2. *A no-right-turn-for-trucks sign at 48th Place and V Street intersection for trucks exiting 48th Place.*
  3. *A crosswalk and a speed control measure on 48th Street near the intersection with U Street;*
  4. *15 mph signs near the library on V Street;*
  5. *A high-visibility crosswalk and crosswalk signal at U Street and MacArthur*
  6. *Sidewalk extensions along all of V Street, 49th Street, and 49th Street.*

Compounding this situation further is the fact that the Applicant was not required to conduct a detailed traffic and capacity analysis. As a result, we are left without any data to fully understand the traffic implications of the new development and even worse, we are left with very few options to mitigate any concerns. In conclusion, I do believe that the development is *objectionable because of increased traffic and the corresponding pedestrian safety issues that will result.*

As such, I request the Zoning Commission to take into account the traffic and pedestrian safety impact on the residential neighborhood and require the applicant to conduct a full traffic and pedestrian safety study thirty days after opening the facility as a contingency of zoning relief. The purpose of the study is to fully address the shift in traffic patterns to ensure pedestrian safety. The study will measure vehicular traffic patterns around the perimeter of the site and will conclude with an action plan to improve neighborhood pedestrian safety. The study should be collaborative with the community through the Palisades Citizens Association and the report should be shared with the community within 60 days of the facility opening. Finally, the plan to improve pedestrian safety will be submitted to DDOT for their review and approval with improvements to be implemented within 3 months of opening.

As a final note, I feel strongly that the Zoning Board should require the Applicant to adequately address, and be accountable for, their traffic impacts on the residential neighborhood and the corresponding pedestrian safety concerns. But, I questioned whether another attempt to influence this process would even be considered by the Zoning Board. In the end, I decided that the goal to make my community safer was worth the effort. I thought about my two children, ages 8 and 10, who cannot safely walk down the street to the library or around the corner to play at their friend's house. Then, I thought about the senior residents of this new continuing care facility and how they will need better crosswalks too. In the end, I decided that the request for a pedestrian safety traffic study is just responsible development and should absolutely be a minimum requirement of the Trammel Crow's Special Exception Case #20308.

Sincerely,

*Lisa DeBow*

Lisa DeBow  
4815 V Street, NW