

4205 Warren St, NW

Washington DC 2001

October 25, 2021

Dear Chairman Hill,

Subject: CASE #20472 – Opposition to River School Application for Special Exemption

We are writing to you to respectfully request that you deny the River School's application for special exemption, and to support the ANC 3 E who voted to oppose the application.

We have lived on Warren St in AU Park, for the past 38 years. During that time we have seen a number of changes in our neighborhood. The prospect of River School moving to the Buchanan Estate in the near future, would bring further changes to the neighborhood, especially in the area that we live, and not for the better.

Our neighborhood is one of charm and beauty, tree lined streets, family oriented, and there are valid concerns about the number of additional vehicles which will come into this area twice daily, if the River School proposal is approved. There seems to have been no thought on the part of River School for the disruption that will ensue.

River School proposes to have traffic entering the school from the Tenley Circle end of Nebraska Avenue and exiting back on to Nebraska Ave on the Van Ness side. This is liable to cause multiple traffic problems. Of grave concern is the likelihood of vehicles coming along Nebraska Ave toward Tenley Circle and then turning left across the traffic to enter the proposed driveway of the school. Similarly, there is the likelihood of cars exiting from the driveway on to Nebraska, turning left, and crossing traffic to proceed along Nebraska towards Tenley Circle.

River School say this will not occur but the ANC 3E point out in their Resolution of 10/14 that there is a lack of consequences should this happen.

There has already been a marked increase in traffic along Nebraska Ave since the AU Law School opened on Tenley Campus and Homeland Security moved into its premises on Ward Circle. There will be further disruption with cars lining up along Nebraska Ave, waiting to enter the school driveway, and probably backing up into Warren St, as they form a line to enter the school.

If some rule is made and enforced, that cars cannot cross traffic, then we assume cars coming from Ward Circle along Nebraska Ave will have to turn left at the lights at Van Ness. At the present time cars are prohibited at rush hour from turning left off Nebraska on to 42nd St. Having turned left at the lights on Nebraska and Van Ness, cars would proceed a short distance along Van Ness and then turn right on to 42nd Street and the right again along Warren St to Nebraska Ave to enter the school.

Similarly, cars exiting the school will turn right on to Nebraska Ave which would mean a left turn at Van Ness to travel out to Wisconsin Ave or right on Van Ness to exit toward Maryland or go back along 42nd St to Yuma to enter Tenley Circle.

Already DDOT has given several intersections near 4200 Nebraska F1 and F2 ratings even without the River School traffic increasing these problems. The schools proposed traffic plan will only add to the present problems.

Despite the school's promise, we predict that the school traffic on campus will eventually be directed straight ahead past the Buchanan House to an exit on 42nd St. where there is already a gate on to 42nd St. This is a probable choice for a flow of traffic for a carpool and some parents will feel it is a preferable exit to Nebraska. If this should occur it will add to congestion with cars turning both left and right on 42nd St close to the traffic circles there.

Already on 42nd St, and Warren St, where we live, parents park in the morning as they bring children to Janney School and walk with them to the school. They park again on 42nd St and Warren St often in front of our house, in the afternoon when they pick up their children from Janney. No doubt there would also be River School parents wanting to park on these streets when bringing their children to school and walk them into school.

River School mentioned there would be structure for carpools and busing but at the current time almost half the students are under Kindergarten level i.e. 18 months to 4 years of age. There is no way that a child in the age group of 18 months to 3 years will be part of a carpool.

Another suggestion has been that parents will bike children to the school. That may be possible with older children but it doesn't seem feasible when so many children attending the school live in Maryland or Virginia.

The school has also mentioned a proposal for "walkers" but so few of the children live within radius of walking to school or even live in Ward 3. The main walkers will be from parents parking in adjoining streets and then walking the children into school.

According to the River School website the current faculty and staff number 70. With an expanded student body of 350 students then the faculty and staff will also expand to 90. The proposed possible 60 parking spaces is far too low a number for the current faculty and staff to be able to park on campus which is desirable, and which most schools try to provide. That leaves an inadequate number of parking spaces for visitors to the school, and patients attending the proposed clinic. If there are not enough parking spaces on campus then visitors, faculty not assigned car parks, and parents, are likely to look for a parking space along 42nd St, or Warren St and this will be at the time when parents are also parking in the same area for Janney School and the nursery school at St. Anne's. In addition, with cars coming along 42nd St NW and into Warren St NW in order to line up for drop off, cars attempting to park in these streets will be another factor adding to increasing congestion in these secondary streets.

At the ANC 3E meeting there was talk of faculty and parents using public transport such as Metro and buses to bring their child to River School. Most of the parents will work in DC. For some it may be possible to stop at the Tenley Metro en route to work to bring a child to River School but for many it may involve a complicated journey changing trains and, in some cases travelling away from their place of work, not in the direction of their work to bring a child to the school. Again, some faculty may bike to the school, but teachers often have papers, books, and other educational material, which are not easy to carry on a bike.

In the Zoom broadcast with the ANC 3E Dana Bash made the point that currently the carpool lasts only 10 minutes. I would say that is probably for the pickup. Our experience from having children in schools in the DC area, and also one of us having been a teacher at a well known school, is that dropping children off to school in the morning can take much longer as parents will not be dropping off their children at the same time; some may be doing this anything up to 45 minutes to half an hour before school begins, whatever is most convenient for them on their way to work. Parents often find walking a child to the classroom enables them to have a short talk with the teacher, particularly should their child have some issue such as not feeling well.

There are already a number of schools in this area adding to the traffic congestion. The proposed roll of 350 children as well as a clinic and preschoolers will seriously affect the neighborhood by adding to the problems.

There is a mention of play areas on the current plan but from what we could ascertain they cover a very small area. With such a wide age group proposed there will be a need for different levels of play areas, but with the plans for the buildings there is very little room for this.

We trust you will consider ours and many of our neighbors' concerns over the potential for increased traffic and parking problems if River School relocates to the Buchanan Estate. Please also take into consideration the fact the ANC 3E voted to oppose the application after several meetings where a number of people expressed opposition to the River School locating to the Buchanan Estate. A lower density use for this valuable land would be more preferable, and in keeping with our peaceful neighborhood.

Sincerely

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