

4233 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016
May 10, 2021

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 200/210-S
Washington, DC 20001

**RE: Application of The River School
Case No. 20472
Safety, Traffic, and Parking Concerns**

Dear Members of the Board:

I am writing on behalf of myself and several neighbors regarding the application made by The River School for variance and/or special exception for Square 1727, Lots 4 and 5. We live near or on Nebraska Avenue, NW, from 41st Street, NW, to Warren Street, NW, across the street from the property and we are writing to raise several related safety, traffic, and parking concerns that we think must be addressed as a condition of granting the school permission to proceed with its project. I did not see any of these issues discussed in the materials before the Board and I did raise them with the Head of School Nancy Mellon and her counsel during an in-person site visit and tour on January 15, 2021. I describe each concern below and have included a map as an attachment that indicates where each concern arises.

Safety, Traffic, and Parking Context

- Nebraska Avenue, NW, between Van Ness Street, NW, and Warren Street, NW, is part of a busy four-lane road that is one of the main routes through Tenleytown, heavily used by people who live in the area and by commuters. It is immediately adjacent to the National Presbyterian School and American University but is also used by students traveling to and from the many other schools, daycare centers, businesses, and activities in the area.
- Street parking is currently allowed on the north side of Nebraska and is only restricted during the morning and evening rush hour. Street parking is also allowed on the south side along the park bounded by Nebraska, 41st, and Van Ness Street, NW, and it is only restricted during the evening rush hour. The parking is regularly used and full during non-rush-hour daytime hours.
- Under the best of circumstances, traffic can back up solid through this stretch from the traffic signals at Van Ness and Tenley Circle during rush hour or when the travel lanes are blocked with parked cars. Any disruption of the traffic flow in the area can make traveling this route very challenging and time consuming.
- Entering Nebraska from 41st or Warren is challenging under the best of circumstances because of the traffic volume and because of restricted lines of sight resulting from parked cars. Making a left turn from either of these streets takes longer, is more

dangerous, and has resulted in a number of accidents at the intersection of Nebraska and Warren.

- Two of our driveways connect to 41st Street right at the corner of Nebraska Avenue. If there is any line of traffic waiting to access Nebraska, it is impossible to get out of our driveways until the traffic clears.

1. The School Should Be Required to Maximize Parking and Off-Street Car Capacity on its Property

- The impact the school will have on the safety, traffic, and parking issues in the neighborhood is minimized the more the school is required to maximize the parking available on its property and the space for cars to pull off Nebraska for drop off and pick up.
- The school should have as many parking spaces as it possibly can, and as long a driveway as it can, to accommodate the additional car volume it will bring to the area.

2. No Left Turn from Nebraska Avenue Northbound into the School

- With only two travel lanes northbound on Nebraska, allowing cars to make a left turn into the school property should be prohibited.
- The turn would be mid-block and there is no traffic light or turn lane.
- Allowing left turns would back up traffic on Nebraska, cause delays, and increase the risk of accidents with cars crossing the oncoming traffic, which is not required to stop or yield.
- The school's traffic will be at its highest during some of the rush hour times and allowing left turns from Nebraska would impede a significant travel artery in the city.

3. No Left Turn exiting the School onto Nebraska Avenue Northbound

- According to the documents submitted with the application, the school property can accommodate only 14 cars off Nebraska at one time for drop off and pick up.
- With several hundred cars coming and going for drop off or pick up during the schools' different arrival and departure times, cars leaving the school property should not be allowed to make a left turn.
- Left turns from the property would slow the flow of cars into and out of the property, which would increase the burden of the increased volume of cars on Nebraska.
- Left turns from the property would also increase the risk of accidents with cars crossing both lanes of traffic, which are not required to stop or yield.

4. Traffic at the Intersection of Nebraska Avenue and 41st Street (Add a Stop Sign and No Left Turn During School Hours)

- In this location, 41st Street, NW, is a 1 ½ block stretch connecting Van Ness and Nebraska. Traffic on Nebraska does not have to stop or yield at the intersection with 41st.
- It is not a high-volume street and allows access to the houses in that area, including our driveways, and serves a short cut for a small number of cars.
- Currently, there is only a yield sign on 41st at Nebraska.
- Entering northbound Nebraska and making a left turn onto southbound Nebraska is challenging given the traffic volume and the fact that crossing traffic does not stop at this intersection. It is especially challenging and more perilous when cars are parked in the curb lane along Nebraska obstructing the view to the south during most of the workday hours.
- If car traffic is required to approach the school property heading southbound on Nebraska, as it should be, cars should be prohibited from making a left turn off 41st during school hours to discourage cars headed to the school from using 41st to make their approach to the school.
- Allowing left turns off 41st during the peak traffic hours at the school will back up the flow of traffic off 41st and negatively impact the houses along 41st, including our driveways.
- 41st is too close to the school's entry driveway to safely allow left turns across all four lanes of traffic to join the queue to enter the school property. This will increase accidents and traffic blockages on this major traffic artery.

5. Traffic at the Intersection of Nebraska Avenue and Warren Street (Add a Traffic Signal or No Left Turn During School Hours)

- Warren Street, NW, is a narrow street not designed for high traffic volume. Traffic on Nebraska does not have to stop or yield at the intersection with Warren.
- It allows access to the houses in that area and serves as a short cut from Wisconsin to Nebraska.
- It is a frequent emergency route for DCFD Engine 20, Truck Company 12, Ambulance 20, Battalion Fire Chief 5, and EMS 5 located at the station at 4300 Wisconsin Avenue, NW.
- Entering northbound Nebraska and making a left turn onto southbound Nebraska is challenging given the traffic volume and the fact that crossing traffic does not stop at this intersection.
- There are regularly accidents at this intersection because of the difficult traffic arrangements.
- If car traffic is required to approach the school property heading southbound on Nebraska, as it should be, cars should be prohibited from making a left turn off Warren during school hours unless there is a traffic signal.

6. No Parking on Either Side of Nebraska Avenue between Van Ness Street and Warren Street During School Hours

- If the school moves forward, the city should not allow parking on Nebraska between Van Ness and Warren during the workday.
- The current parking rules allow cars to regularly park on Nebraska throughout the workday, overlapping with the highest volume hours for the school.
- When cars are parked on Nebraska, they block one of the two traffic lanes headed in that specific direction and noticeably reduce the traffic capacity of Nebraska.
- With the addition of the volume headed to the school, the limited capacity for cars on the school property, and the added hazard of cars entering and leaving the property in the curb lane, traffic will be significantly impacted if parking in this stretch is not eliminated.
- Even one parked car will cause traffic to and from the school to move from the curb lane into the middle lane and bring traffic flow to a halt.

We think it is critical to address the safety, traffic, and parking concerns identified in this letter that will result from granting The River School's application so that this project will not have a negative impact on the people living in and traveling through the neighborhood.

Thank you for considering our concerns and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

/s/TES

Thomas E. Sharp
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cc: Melissa and Jeff Modell, owners, 4225 41st Street, NW
Carey Needham, owner, 4237 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Stacie Benes, owner, 4022 Warren Street, NW

Chairman Phil Mendelson, Council of the District of Columbia
Councilmember Mary M. Cheh, Ward 3, Council of the District of Columbia
Councilmember Robert White, Jr., At-Large, Council of the District of Columbia
Councilmember Anita Bonds, At-Large, Council of the District of Columbia
Councilmember Christina Henderson, At-Large, Council of the District of Columbia
Councilmember Elissa Silverman, At-Large, Council of the District of Columbia

Director, District of Columbia Department of Transportation

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Matthew Cohen, Vice-Chair
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Tom Quinn, Treasurer
Jonathan McHugh

Nancy Mellon, Head of School, The River School
Meghan Hottel-Cox, Goulston & Storrs

Map of the Area

