

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Jay Korman <jaykorman0@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 1:37 PM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Comment in Support: BZA Application No. 20472: The River School

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

Dear Secretary / Chairperson,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about River School and its plan to move to the American University neighborhood, which I support wholeheartedly. Note that I live 3.5 blocks from the Underoak property off of Van Ness Street, and have no connection to River School, past or present. I support River's plan for three reasons:

First, I am the child of deaf parents with hearing grandparents and fully appreciate the learning difficulties hearing impaired children experience when they are denied access to education and language acquisition. To this day, my mother has difficulty with language owing to the disparities in education she suffered through as a child, which forces me (as a grown adult with my own college age kids) to remain her interpreter and "explainer" of complex issues at important meetings such as doctor visits. For these reasons, River School's mission is a critically important one in general, and in the District in particular. Aside from the learning instruction provided, its Medicare-covered assistance provides services to the larger hearing impaired DC community that is unique in the area and serves the city's mission to support its citizens with impairments.

The second reason I support River School is the move is "the right thing" to do and is in the interests of the city at large. Beyond the "noble" mission spelled out already, moving the school to an area with a metro stop a few blocks away versus its current location (in a transportation desert with no access to a driveway) improves safety and accessibility for students, teachers, parents, bicyclists, pedestrians and other residents now on or near River's MacArthur Blvd campus. While I acknowledge traffic in my own immediate neighborhood will increase at two specific and rather narrow periods of time during the day (student drop off and pick up), I do not believe River should be penalized for long term traffic impacts because other developments (including City Ridge and Sidwell) with possibly larger traffic impacts were approved before River's application. And while City Ridge and Sidwell may also bring benefits to the neighborhood, these pale in comparison to River School's city-wide benefits for the hearing impaired.

The final reason I support River School is their sincere efforts to work with the neighborhood on traffic mitigation and the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to produce a design the HPRB would accept, even if the property isn't currently designated as historic. I'm fairly confident the "next developer" if this were to fall through won't care to work with HPRB or the neighborhood to the degree River has and could install a project that will have far less of a positive impact on the neighborhood and the city writ large. I further worry that a rejection of River School's exemption will result in a vacant and dilapidated property, which is in nobody's interest.

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.20472
EXHIBIT NO.49

Thanks for your consideration,

Jay Korman
4221 45th Street, NW
Washington DC 20016
(202) 452-6907
jaykorman0@gmail.com