

**Philip A Branton MD, FCAP
Ellen F Lazarus MD
3124 Oliver St NW
Washington, DC 20015-1655
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Dear ANC 3/4G Chair, Mr Randy Speck and Commissioner John Higgins:

RE: Board of Zoning Adjustment Case #20643, Maret School and Episcopal Center for Children.

We write to object to the Maret School's proposal to develop the field behind the Episcopal Center for Children (ECC) at Nebraska Ave and Utah Ave NW. While we do not live immediately adjacent to the site, we have lived and raised two (now grown) children in the Chevy Chase (CC) neighborhood since 1996, at 3124 Oliver St NW. This is a family-friendly and welcoming neighborhood. As you are aware, Lafayette Elementary school is nearby and the ECC itself operated a school for many years in harmony with neighbors. The neighborhood is supportive of schools, children, and athletics. However, the Maret school's plan to develop the open field behind the ECC is not consistent with the types of public sports fields available and supported for many years behind Lafayette School, for example: the proposal would entail significant, environmentally degrading changes to the ECC site which would affect all who live nearby. We can summarize these in three inter-related points.

1. There is loss of open green space and destruction of heritage trees. In a warming world we should be doing everything possible to mitigate loss of open space and trees. Athletic fields with artificial turf are well-documented so-called 'heat islands.' Grass respire and releases some moisture into the air; thus, ground temperatures rarely exceed ambient temperature significantly. Artificial turfs may reach temperatures in excess of 140 degrees F on hot sunny days, as occur in DC in July and August. This is in addition to the effects of proposed concrete or asphalt-covered parking decks on the grounds. These constructions will all have deleterious effects on the microclimate of the Chevy Chase neighborhood.
2. This development is not consistent with 'smart growth'. DC is evolving toward maximizing growth and development along already established transit corridors such as Connecticut and Wisconsin Aves NW, where there is ample public transit via metrobus and metro rail. CC DC is in a part of the city with poor public transit options, having lost

one bus line in the last few years (E6), and currently is serviced by the M4 (which does not operate on weekends) and the E4, which is cross-town, along Military Road and McKinley St NW. It is inevitable that supportive fans/friends/family of student athletes for Maret will arrive by private car in the CC neighborhood, creating parking problems, particularly along smaller residential streets. In contrast, Nationals Park, which was planned 15 or so years ago, was built in SW DC for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was good proximity to a metro stop. Imagine the traffic woes on South Capitol Street if all the thousands of fans who arrive by Metro instead had to drive to attend Nationals games. That, on a smaller scale, is a potential crisis for the CC neighborhood.

3. Given the dearth of public transit options, the many students using the proposed ECC/Maret fields will also likely arrive by personal car. Maret officials have stated they will provide bus service for students using the field, but, in reality, this is likely only for events immediately after school. Team practices frequently occur on weekends or other times. "The easier thing" for parents will be to drop them off directly at the ECC site. The extra traffic will increase pollution, will lead to additional over-parking in residential areas, and is teaching the next generation exactly the wrong lesson, because traveling where we want, whenever we want, by private vehicle is not going to be ecologically sustainable for much longer, certainly not by the time today's teenagers are in their 50s and 60s. A far better choice would be for the Maret community to set a good 'green example' for its youth by searching for an already-existing sports complex to which the students can readily commute by public transit. I do not personally know, but suspect, that there are many under-utilized fields in the DMV that are near metro rail and/or bus stops and that could be rented or leased for their use. It would be much better to utilize existing training/playing sites than by adding to over development.

Thank you for taking the time to read these comments. If you have questions we can be reached by e mail at pbranton@gmail.com

Philip A Branton



Ellen F Lazarus

