

Dear BZA members:

I am writing to express my opposition to Case #21101: Mendomas LLC's application for 245 Peabody Street, NW. The application seeks a Special Exception under daytime care use requirements to construct a second story addition, and convert to a child development center for 82 children and 20 staff, an existing detached, one-story with cellar building in the R-1B zone. **This application should be denied for multiple reasons, including:**

- ***Violative Application.*** As one of the commenters is prepared to explain during oral comments at the upcoming BZA hearing, the application does not meet the legal criteria for the exception it seeks. On that basis alone, this request should be denied.
- ***Procedural Irregularities at ANC Meeting.*** There are serious concerns about the ANC 4B meeting at which the resolution to support this application passed. For example, I am advised that (1) one supporting ANC member was unprepared for the meeting and was unaware of basic facts that should have and would have been known to her with sufficient pre-meeting preparation and (2) another supporting ANC member purportedly abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest, and yet provided his opinions, debated neighbors expressing opposition, and attempted to influence others' ANC decisionmakers during the meeting itself. On this record, the ANC's support of this application is called into question.
- ***Traffic and Volume Concerns.*** The property sits on a narrow residential street, in a neighborhood that was intentionally developed to be a "neighborhood of homes." Except for a block of commercial properties at 3rd and Sheridan Streets NW—where several other under-enrolled day care centers are currently situated—the rest of

Manor Park generally consists of residential-sized plots, schools on self-contained and spacious lots, and (as relevant here) a church building at 245 Peabody. This particular church building is situated on a lot no bigger than the typical home, with no more parking or outdoor yard space than the typical home, and with an alley shared with two intersecting streets' worth of homes. It faces a narrow residential street that is already jam-packed with weekday car traffic and heavy pedestrian use (mostly elementary, middle, and high school-aged children) due to the Capital City Public Charter School located a block away. Bringing *an additional* 82 children and 20 staff daily to this tiny little Peabody Street plot is going to add a disruptive amount of additional car traffic and people volume to a lot, street, and neighborhood that cannot support it.¹ Simply put, this is not an appropriate proposed use for this lot – and the applicants have not submitted a plan that provides a realistic solution for the reasonably foreseen daily access needs of the pre-school aged children and families, or daily parking needs for families and staff. By trying to shoehorn a busy private business onto a residential plot, the applicant is apparently planning to throw a host of negative externalities off on surrounding neighbors who will undoubtedly have to deal with double parking during pick-up and drop-off, blocked and impassable streets, inappropriate use of the alleys, staff taking up all the parking in front of their homes (which has already been an issue with Capital City, as it is)—and not to mention increased trash, litter, noise, and pests that all of this will bring. This is unfair and unwise. Although it is important that the property be put to productive use,

¹ The plot on which the church building sits used to be far larger, but it was subdivided a few years ago – and a new single-family home was built on the half that was sold off. The remaining lot is simply not large enough to accommodate the applicant's current plan.

the use should acknowledge the constraints of the property and the character of the neighborhood. Mendomas' application does neither.

- ***Concerns Abouts Day Care Center Operators/Leaders.*** One or more of the leaders of this proposed day care were previously fired from their roles leading a DC public charter school due to their mishandling of several young students' sexual abuse allegations against a teacher.² This raises serious concerns about child safety and the suitability of this applicant to operate a day care facility in our neighborhood. See the following *Washington Post* articles for more information:

- Leaders at D.C. charter school are out of jobs after teacher's sex-abuse case - https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/leaders-at-dc-charter-school-are-out-of-jobs-after-teachers-sex-abuse-case/2017/11/30/84cb7c2e-d5dc-11e7-b62d-d9345ced896d_story.html
- Families sue a top-ranked D.C. school over handling of sexually abusive teacher - https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/families-sue-top-ranked-dc-school-over-handling-of-sexually-abusive-teacher/2018/01/11/cbc04d54-f22d-11e7-b390-a36dc3fa2842_story.html

For these reasons and more, I am opposed to this application and ask that you deny it.

Sincerely,

Natalie Sanders

² It is my understanding that this application ultimately proposes to locate another outpost of Estrellitas Montessori on this site. The "Leadership Team" page for this day care previously listed the names of the day care leaders, which led me to search for them by name and find news of their previous mishandling and termination. And I previously mentioned and provided this information during an ANC 4B07 meeting that the applicants attend. After this meeting, the day care center erased all information from the "Leadership Team" page – with it now simply stating: "Page Under Construction." <https://www.estrellitasdc.com/our-school>