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D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 18, 2003

TO: Mr. Alberto P. Batisda
Secretary to the Zoning Commission

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-20
Exhibit 68

FROM: Cullen E. Elias

RE: Catholic University of America Master Plan Update (Zoning Commission Case No. 02-20)

At the public hearing on February 20, 2003, additional information was requested from the Applicant, The Catholic University of America, regarding the potential impacts of proposed roadway improvements along McCormack Road. The Commission is aware that the impacts, regarding the total traffic utilizing McCormack Road, were already assessed in a supporting traffic study addendum, and dated April 2002. However, the Commission felt that the impacts of the improvements on existing truck traffic needed to be further assessed by the Applicant, in consultation with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). This memorandum responds to that specific request, and also provides further information that would facilitate the Commission's review and decision-making process regarding this issue. The summary of our conditions is as follows:

- The current pedestrian access and circulation conditions are unsafe along McCormack Road in the vicinity of the adjacent Metrorail station access.
- The proposed roadway improvements would greatly increase safety.
- The redistribution of traffic under the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the local area and the general public.

As background, we note that McCormack Road currently serves two-way traffic, except for the southern 100± ft. section between Michigan Avenue and the campus' southernmost driveway. Just to the south of that driveway is a heavily utilized pedestrian crosswalk, which is part of the pedestrian system linking the campus with the adjacent Brookland – CUA Metrorail Station. McCormack Road currently serves approximately 1,300 vehicles per average weekday. The morning and afternoon peak hour volumes entering that roadway from Michigan Avenue are 164 and 93, respectively.

The proposed improvements along McCormack Road include the provision of a cul-de-sac just north of the campus' southernmost driveway, and appropriate signage that would prohibit the use of the southern section of McCormack Road by all except service/emergency vehicles. ***The primary purpose of these changes is to eliminate observed pedestrian/vehicle conflicts including trucks, as well as the elimination of observed intrusions of non-campus trucks and other vehicles on campus roadways.*** The latter situation is primarily due to the one-way

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northbound restriction along the southern section of McCormack Road. The proposed roadway changes would result in the redistribution of traffic (including trucks) to other campus entrances and external roadways, and this situation was assessed in the traffic study referenced earlier. That study demonstrated that there would be no adverse impacts of the planned changes.

In response to the Commission's request, a meeting was held with DDOT staff to further discuss the proposed roadway changes and related impacts on truck traffic utilizing McCormack Road to access the Fort Totten Solid Waster Transfer Station situated to the north of the campus. A memorandum (dated February 25, 2003) providing further perspective on this subject issue, and a copy of the traffic study addendum referenced earlier, were also submitted to DDOT. Key points raised in the memorandum are as follows:

a) The primary purpose of the planned roadway changes is to enhance pedestrian access and safety for users of the adjacent Metrorail Station, as well as to eliminate the intrusion on campus roadways by trucks and other vehicles associated with the Fort Totten Trash Transfer Station.

b) Observations made recently (February, 2003) at the McCormack Road/Michigan Avenue intersection, indicate that truck traffic has declined, relative to counts conducted in September, 2001. We understand that the management of the waste transfer station has taken initiatives to control access patterns by their patrons.

c) Trucks entering McCormack Road from the east were observed to be insignificant over the period 2001 – 2003. In addition, trucks accessing the trash transfer station from the east along Michigan Avenue are more likely to use Taylor Street and McCormack Avenue (north of Taylor Street).

d) Items (b) and (c) may be due to efforts made by the Department of Public Works, in response to representations made by the Catholic University of America.

A copy of the February 25, 2003 memorandum is included as Attachment 1, to facilitate further review.

DDOT's response to the Commission's request is documented in memorandum, dated March 10, 2003, addressed to the Office of Zoning. A copy of this document is included as Attachment 2. The memorandum indicates that DDOT does not support the planned improvements along McCormack Road. The factors constituting the basis for DDOT's decision, are discussed below:

a) **Accident Experience – John McCormack Road/Michigan Avenue Intersection**. *DDOT reports that the City's accident record shows that no crashes occurred over the period (1999 - 2002), at this intersection; and the Applicant did not provide "additional options for safety improvements".*

The vehicular-pedestrian conflicts cited by the University as a primary reason for the planned improvements, occur approximately 100 feet to the north of the referenced intersection. As such, the noted vehicle-pedestrian conflicts would not be reflected

by the accident statistics indicated by DDOT. In addition, as stated in the traffic study addendum, the subject Master Plan calls for the provision of signage and pavement treatments, in conjunction with the proposed cul-de-sac (see Section 2.0, Item b, page 2 of the study).

b) **Redistribution of Traffic**. *The DDOT report states that the planned McCormack Road improvements would redistribute the inbound traffic to the other campus entranceways off Michigan Avenue, as well as increase traffic volumes and congestion at the 4th Street/Harewood Road intersection which currently operates at capacity during AM and PM peak hours.*

The proposed Master Plan calls for Cardinal Drive, the east-west internal roadway that currently connects McCormack Road and the other campus entrances along Michigan Avenue, to be restricted to pedestrian use only. This provision would prevent the use of the other entrances for access to the land uses along McCormack Road.

As noted earlier, the traffic currently entering McCormack Road from Michigan Avenue does not include an appreciable volume of trucks, which access the DPW Fort Totten Trash Transfer Station. In addition, vehicles entering McCormack Road from the east along Michigan Avenue, would not impact the 4th Street/Harewood Road at Michigan Avenue intersection. This would be due to the connection provided between Michigan Avenue and McCormack Road and the trash transfer station, via Taylor Street. Considering the above, only vehicles entering McCormack Road from the west along Michigan Avenue would impact the 4th Street/Harewood Road at Michigan Avenue intersection. A significant number of those vehicles are already using the subject intersection, and have been included in the base traffic turning movement counts conducted as part of the primary traffic study (dated April, 2002). The planned McCormack Road improvements would therefore have a marginal impact on traffic volumes and congestion at that intersection.

c) **Vehicular Impacts**. *The DDOT reports under this heading (on page 2 of this report) that the Applicant did not furnish DDOT with an assessment of the potential impacts of the redistributed traffic on the local roadway network*

The assessment was presented to the DDOT in the Traffic Impact Assessment Addendum dated August, 2002. A copy of that study was provided to the DDOT at least twice. The study concluded that the proposed McCormack Road improvements would not have adverse impacts on the study area roadway network. The local area roadway network would continue to operate acceptably over the Master Plan horizon period, except for the Michigan Avenue/Harewood Road intersection. This situation would be due primarily to projected growth in through/commuter traffic along Michigan Avenue, as well as trips from planned developments within the immediate study area.

d) **Usage of McCormack Road**. *The DDOT report indicates that the "study fails to provide information on the usage of the subject section of roadway for the general public, including residents and users of the Metro Station."*

The traffic study addendum notes the following (on page 5):

" b) The land uses currently abutting the section of McCormack Road, between Taylor Street and Michigan Avenue (including the section to be closed), are within the CUA main campus;

c) Through traffic along McCormack Road is observed to be quite low, and alternative access to McCormack Road is available from the north at Taylor Street."

In addition, due to the one-way northbound restriction along the southern section of McCormack Road, as well as the kiss-n-ride and park–n-ride facilities provided on the east side of the Metro Station, drop-offs associated with transit usage were observed to be low. The planned improvements would not be against the public interest, since the roadway serves primarily campus traffic, and alternative roads are available.

e) **Restriction of Vehicular Access**. *The DDOT report indicates that the planned improvements would restrict vehicular access to the campus.*

Alternative access to the campus land uses, along McCormack Road is (and will be) provided from the north via Taylor Street.

f) **Impact on Neighboring Streets**. *The DDOT report indicates that the planned improvements would increase traffic on the neighboring streets.*

As noted in Attachment 1, no trucks currently enter McCormack Road from the east along Michigan Avenue, to access the DPW Fort Totten Waste Transfer Station. In addition, trucks from the east along Michigan Avenue use Taylor Street to access McCormack Road and the trash transfer station. As such, the potential use of neighboring residential streets by redistributed trucks is and would not be an issue. As noted in Item (d) immediately above, the volume of through trips between Michigan Avenue and Taylor Street or the trash transfer station, were observed to be quite low. These trips will be well distributed within the local roadway network, minimizing impacts on any particular street.

Based on the above, this memorandum concludes that the planned McCormack Road improvements could be accommodated without having any adverse impacts on the local area roadway network, current users of McCormack Road and the adjacent Metrorail station, the Catholic University of America and the neighboring communities. Moreover, the proposed McCormack Road changes would conform to the relevant City stipulations.

We trust that this memorandum satisfies the request of the Zoning Commission. Should the Commission require further information, please let us know. Thank you.

CEE/hw

Attachments: As noted

Cc: Susan Pervi, Vice President (CUA)
Allison Prince, Esquire (Shaw – Pittman)
Marsha Lea, (EDAW)
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