

July 29, 2015

Zoning Commission
of District of Columbia
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Comstock Sixth Street, LLC
Housing Development
Square 3788, Lot 814
Case #15-04

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing this letter in support of a bicycle and pedestrian road leading from 6th Street, NE and ending on Emerson Street, NE. My decision is based upon the original intent of the existing roadway, the false belief that allowing cars will decrease traffic at the dwellings north of the intersection of 6th and Buchanan Streets, and the safety issues caused by opening the road to vehicles.

The land on which Emerson Park stands was originally owned by Thom. Somerville Co. and it was used as a storage lot. It contained cement blocks, rusting equipment, etc. and had been a neighborhood eyesore for years. Thom. Somerville Co. set up a private road to allow lot access from either Emerson Street (north) or from 6th Street (west). Furthermore, this road was scaled to accommodate cement truck traffic and little else. Once Thom. Somerville Co. sold its lot – on which Emerson Park was developed – its need for the road ceased. Since that time, the road has been closed. Please refer to Exhibit A.

Exhibit A

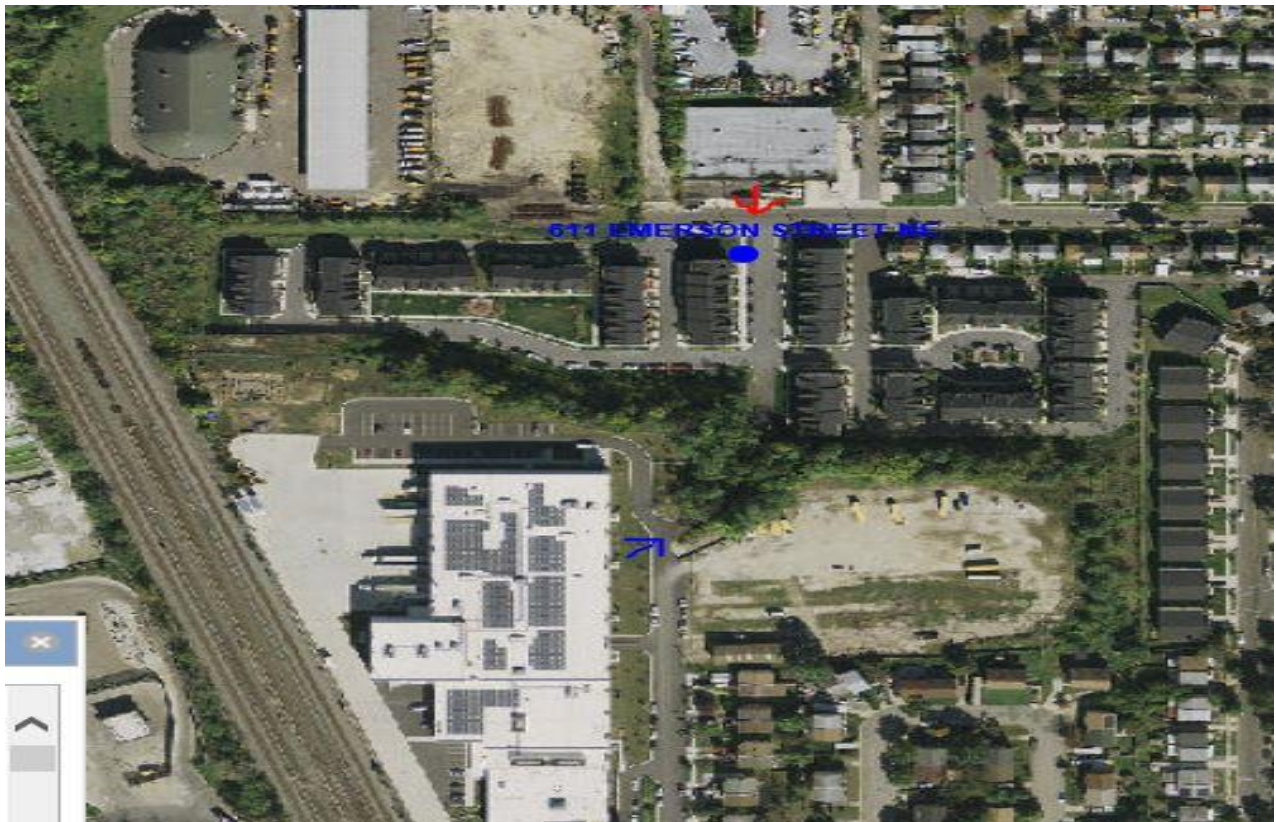


Note: The above picture shows the Thom. Somerville Co. lot as of 2007. It is bounded by the streets of Emerson (north), 7th (East), Buchanan (South – not shown) and 6th (West). The blue arrow denotes the lot road's beginning while the red arrow denotes its end.

Reopening the road to reduce traffic north of the 6th and Buchanan Streets intersection is a false argument. Most of the non-residential traffic goes to the Capital Food Bank, which diverts its large truck deliveries to Puerto Rico Avenue, just below the 6th and Buchanan intersection. All traffic traveling north on Puerto Rico Avenue will not use a road through Emerson Park since it adds travel mileage and time. Drivers north of the Food Bank may benefit from a road through Emerson Park, but this road will attract many other commuters looking for a shortcut to Catholic University, its shops and beyond. In essence, the road through Emerson Park will dramatically increase traffic on 6th Street – the very opposite of what the residents desire.

Lastly, there is the issue of safety. A lot has changed since Thom. Somerville Co. owned its private road. First, the Emerson Park community has grown around it. A best, the road is now used as a driveway, and it's not capable of becoming a two-way street. I doubt if the road is as wide as existing streets, and the housing within the condo community probably is not set-back far enough from this road. This is a real safety issue. Also, if vehicular traffic is allowed, then who pays for road maintenance? This is an unfunded mandate imposed upon the Emerson Park community. Please refer to Exhibit B.

Exhibit B



Note: This picture depicts Emerson Park as of 2013. Please note that the road runs through the center of the community. Converting it to a standard road will, in my opinion, decrease pedestrian safety and will increase noise.

Furthermore, allowing vehicular traffic through Emerson Park will dramatically increase Emerson Street traffic as more commuters learn of this shortcut to Puerto Rico Avenue. Our neighborhood will be overrun with traffic as density increases due to the Cafritz, Walmart and other developments. Add to this, shoppers and commuters who will use Puerto Rico Avenue to avoid bottlenecks on 12th Street, Michigan Avenue, North Capitol, Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue, and you will have created a real mess.

In summary, I ask the Zoning Board Commissioners to maintain the status quo and to allow only bicycle and pedestrian traffic through Emerson Park. My rationale follows:

- The original road was privately owned by Thom. Somerville Co. to support entrance and egress to its lot.
- It is a false argument that allowing vehicular traffic on the road reduces overall traffic in the area. Just the opposite is true. Commuters and shopper will quickly discover this route and use it to avoid traffic bottlenecks at the expense of our community.
- Lastly, after reviewing the 2007 and 2013 pictures of the area, it is clear that the road runs through the heart of a thriving community, increasing the danger to all. Furthermore, there is the ongoing issue of road maintenance. Will the city cover it or the home owners?

Maintaining the status quo is in the best interest of everyone involved.

Thank You.

Robert T. Oliver
2013 President North Michigan Park Civic Association