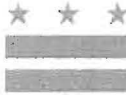


GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



Policy, Planning and Sustainability Administration

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Memorandum

TO: Jamison L. Weinbaum, Director
DC Office of Zoning

FROM: Karina Ricks *M. Ricks FOR*
District Department of Transportation

DATE: June 24, 2010

SUBJECT: ZC case # 97-16A (Application of The Lowell School; 1640 Kalmia Road N.W.)

APPLICATION

The Lowell School (the "Applicant"), located at 1640 Kalmia Road N.W. in Ward 4, is seeking approval of a planned unit development (PUD) to expand the School to include 7th and 8th grades, increase the number of faculty and staff from 60 to 100 and to renovate and further develop the campus. It does not propose to increase the cap on student enrollment. In addition to expanding its services and increasing the faculty and staff cap, the School is proposing two phases of physical improvements to its campus. The first phase includes the renovation of and addition to the Parkside building along 17th Street to accommodate the 7th and 8th grade classrooms (in addition to the existing 6th grade classrooms). The addition will include computer labs, art studios, a theater, library and gathering places.

The second phase will include the razing of an existing building, Fraser Hall, and replacing it with a below-grade 70 space parking garage with recreational space on top of it, at grade. At the same time, the School will expand its gymnasium. In all, the development results in a net reduction of approximately 7,305 square feet of development and a net gain of 46 parking spaces for a total of 136 vehicle parking spaces. 90 parking spaces currently exist on the campus. The resulting floor area ratio, once the proposed work is completed, will be .34 and the lot occupancy will be 15%.

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RECOMMENDATION IN BRIEF

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has had insufficient time to review the Applicant's proposed transportation measures especially as they relate to the staggered morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up set to start in September 2010. The Applicant's lack of data reflecting improvement by using Transportation Management Plan (TMP) measures to decrease the neighborhood transportation impacts does not permit DDOT to provide a positive recommendation to support the PUD at this time.

DDOT ANALYSIS

The Applicant began to meet with DDOT in April 2009 to review the school's existing transportation management plan (TMP). During that meeting, the Applicant became knowledgeable of DDOT's concerns regarding the overall lack of sustainable transportation practices (i.e. well organized carpool, WMATA SmartBenefits, bicycling to school, walking to school, etc.) by Lowell School students and faculty.

The Applicant has not provided DDOT enough information to demonstrate that the school's carpool program is used to it fullest potential. According to a 2008 survey conducted by the school, 27% of the morning drop-off (79 students), and 34% of the afternoon pick-up (99 students) continue to ride alone and not participate in the carpool program. The Applicant's December 9, 2009 transportation impact study states, "... the school currently generates 384 total AM vehicle trips and 317 school PM peak trips during the entire peak period. The school currently generates 356 AM peak hour trips, 65 commuter PM peak hour trips and 175 school PM peak hour trips." During the drop-off and pick-up times, the school has significant transportation impacts on the neighborhood. The queue of vehicles located on 17th Street N.W. entering in to the school driveway, obstructs resident's driveways and reduces the street to one lane of travel. The school has shown a willingness to participate in staggered drop-off and pick-up times. The Applicant's transportation report states, "Beginning in the 2010 school year, the Lowell School will begin staggered start and ending times for students. Staggered start and dismissal times will create an opportunity to disperse Lowell School traffic throughout a greater time period. Currently 100% of Lowell School students arrive and 90% depart during a one hour period." However, DDOT has yet to view the staggered start and ending times in practice and cannot determine if they will remedy the neighborhood transportation impacts. With an expansion of student enrollment DDOT is less confident the staggered times will help to reduce or minimize the existing impacts.

Even with the implementation of successful staggered start and dismissal times, there may be adverse effects on the neighborhood from such a large number of vehicle trips accessing the site. DDOT recommends further reducing the number of vehicle trips to

and from the site through the creation of incentives for parents who carpool, bicycle, or walk to and from school. The following mitigation strategies have been provided to the Applicant after DDOT met with them on April 22, 2010:

- Consider starting a Safe Routes to School Program at The Lowell School. Safe Routes to School programs work to improve the safety and convenience of walking and bicycling to school. The most successful programs include activities such as events and contests that encourage parents to walk and bicycle to school. Many programs even include options for families who live too far from the school to walk. Some schools are using their Safe Routes to School programs as a way to attract increased enrollment from families who live near the school.
- Consider leveraging the existing carpool website to include Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains. Walking school buses are like carpools, except they travel on foot rather than in a vehicle. Bicycle Trains are groups of students who bicycle together with adult supervision.
- Consider other rewards for families that carpool, walk, or bicycle, such as entering the families into an annual raffle for a chance to win prizes.

In order for parents to consider bicycling to and from school with their children a viable option, bicycle parking should be provided according to DDOT specifications. The bicycle racks should be in an area that is highly visible to parents and students. The School Handbook should also include a description of the location of bicycle parking.

The Applicant's transportation impact study provides no information related to the existing or proposed options for the faculty transportation at The Lowell School. DDOT would like to see the multimodal transportation split for the faculty and what incentives the school may provide to its faculty to use sustainable transportation. The Applicant appears to be increasing its parking inventory to accommodate its various visitors to the campus. While DDOT believes the increase in parking space inventory may be for visitors, it appears to also accommodate the needs of faculty driving to the school. DDOT believes the faculty carpool users should be rewarded with a discounted fare campus parking space. Faculty members opting to use single occupancy vehicles should pay full fare to park on the campus.

DDOT believes the proposed increase in vehicle parking spaces does not encourage parents and faculty needing to access the campus, to use sustainable transportation methods. Instead of the proposed 136 vehicle parking spaces, the Applicant should organize its faculty and student carpool efforts to reduce the need for the proposed parking inventory. During the April 22, 2010 meeting with the Applicant, DDOT understood the Applicant was to implement a school bus program to additionally reduce the vehicle trips to the campus. Again, DDOT has yet to see the school bus practice take shape and measure if it reduces the existing transportation impacts.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

DDOT does not support the Applicant's proposal for a PUD. There is not enough information to make a determination whether the Applicant can make a meaningful reduction in the number of vehicle trips to and from the school. The Applicant provides the following in its 2009 transportation impact study under the subject 'Green Initiatives': "Encourage staff, parents, and students to participate in green friendly events like the International Walk to School Day." DDOT strongly requests the Applicant provide significantly more information and proposed action items to reduce its existing transportation impacts on the neighborhood.

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