

November 4, 2017

Abeba Taddese
Adam Lingo
1505 Gallatin Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011

Chairman Fred Hill or Current Chairman
D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Opposition to Specific Features of Application #19581: Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School Application to Increase the Number of Students from 300 to 600 at 5000 14th St NW

Dear Chair and Members of the Board:

My husband, Adam Lingo and I have lived at 1505 Gallatin Street for the last 15 years. We moved from a busy, congested street in NE to our current home in Sixteenth Street Heights to raise our three young children. We were looking for safer streets, a quieter neighborhood and the great access to Rock Creek park and green space that the neighborhood offers.

We first learned of LAMB's intent to purchase Kingsbury School in September when we received notice of its application to the BZA as property owners within 200 feet of the school. While we understand that this may meet the requirements for notifying a community, it is extremely short notice for a neighborhood that is now grappling with a potential six to seven-fold increase in student and staff population within 200 feet of our homes, and the impact this will have on traffic, noise and quality of life. I have summarized briefly some of our key concerns below:

Traffic

Our biggest concern is that our neighborhood simply is not prepared to accommodate the increase in traffic that LAMB's application will bring. Our neighborhood does not even know what it is like to be at the 300-cap approved for Kingsbury in its application in 2000. The school seemed to be at its peak in terms of population, when we moved to the neighborhood in 2003, which we have learned was not 300 students. But even with that size student/staff/parent population, we encountered several challenges. First, it was nearly impossible to get across Piney Branch (from my house going South to Decatur) during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times. Often there was a queue of cars on Piney Branch waiting to enter the school, a queue on Farragut Street with cars blocking traffic on Piney Branch, and cars parked along Piney Branch between Gallatin and Emerson Streets. The current traffic study does not address the potential for this type of back-up of cars on Piney Branch, which we witnessed first-hand with a much smaller student/staff/parent population. Additionally, given that Piney Branch has no sidewalks, as residents in the neighborhood with kids walking to bus stops, riding bikes and walking dogs during the morning and evening hours, we are worried about safety.

We also are concerned about the potential for traffic to back-up on our street, as LAMB parents attempt to reach 16th street school to head either north or south on 16th. The intersection at 16th and Gallatin does not have a traffic light and will be challenged by an increase in the number of vehicles. Even if changes are made to the timing of the light at 14th and Gallatin it is not clear to us how potential morning back-ups will be mitigated on 16th and Gallatin. Further, Gallatin Street narrows between Iowa and Piney Branch. If cars are parked on both sides of the street like the narrower Piney Branch Road, traffic can become restricted to one lane traffic.

Finally, while the application notes that LAMB will make use of the 107 parking spaces on the Kingsbury School's grounds, we are concerned that our neighborhood streets will be used for overflow parking when parking spaces are full, whether on an inclement day during the morning rush, when conferences or other special events are held or when construction of the gym begins. Our neighborhood is home to over 44 institutions. When special events are held at the 3 churches in our most immediate neighborhood (including events held during the week such as funerals), or at Rock Creek Park, parking is a challenge.

Noise

We are concerned about the noise that an increased student population size will bring to the neighborhood. In the absence of trees or other barrier to help buffer the noise and as a property owner within 200 feet of the school, the dramatic increase in noise levels will alter the quiet quality of life that we chose when we moved to this neighborhood. We understand neighborhoods grow and evolve, but we do not feel that the potential noise issues that a school within 200 feet of our property could cause, have been addressed.

Overall Quality of Life

We understand that LAMB is a valued and respected school and a great option for parents in our community. We are not adamantly opposed to having LAMB as a neighbor but don't want to sacrifice the quality of life we have value – safe and peaceful streets. And while we certainly don't want to judge LAMB's future performance on Kingsbury school's failure to satisfy the conditions laid out by the BZA in 2000 (including a failure to establish a community liaison and meet on a quarterly basis, to work with the community to develop a policy for leasing the school's facilities and replace trees), we are wary of LAMB's application to locate in our neighborhood.

We ask the BZA to take the neighborhood's interests into consideration and to make approval of LAMB's application contingent on putting a plan in place to address the concerns we are voicing.

Sincerely,

Abeba Taddese
Adam Lingo
1505 Gallatin St NW
Washington, DC 20011