

February 18, 2018

To: Public Space Committee, District Department of Transportation
Jon Squicciarini, ANC Commissioner 1B04
Board of Zoning Adjustment
Historic Preservation Review Board

From: Brad Hicks
Ryan Dietrich
1419 W Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009

Re: Comments in opposition to the public space application by Madison Investments, LLC (Case 19705)

We write today in strong opposition to the pending public space application by Madison Investments, LLC, for the massive proposed redevelopment of the Martha's Table property. Recently, we learned that the developer is submitting an amended public space application to create an entrance to an underground parking garage on W Street. As the resident homeowners of the nearest rowhouse to the development, we are strongly opposed to this plan and encourage the Public Space Committee to reject the application in favor of a more suitable location for the garage entrance such as along the alley where it was originally planned.

We are uniquely affected by the street-level impacts of the proposed placement of the garage entrance on W Street and believe that it is unworkable for the following reasons:

Residential character

- W Street is an residential street, lined to one side mostly by row houses including single family homes like ours unlike V Street, which features a large government office building across from the proposed development, large multi-unit residential buildings, a school, a restaurant, and church. A mix of commercial buildings, a school, and one residential building currently borders the alley behind the Martha's Table property.
- W Street is a one-way street with heavy cross-town traffic and is a common East-West route for emergency vehicles. Even without the garage entrance, existing traffic on W Street requires a traffic study and calming measures.

- For example, I mentioned to a friend recently that the proposed garage entrance is on W and, unprompted, he said, “No way, that will clog up the street even more. I used to drive on W to avoid U Street, but nowadays it’s just as bad.”
- Traffic will only get worse because developers have planned to bring more than 800 new rental units to our stretch of 14th street alone according to a recent article on Urbanturf.com (February 14, 2018).

Traffic

- Creating yet another entrance and exit to a garage immediately next to the existing alley would add an unnecessary choke point to W Street traffic.
- Multifamily residential buildings on the south side of W Street don’t have pick up/drop off areas in front of their entrances, which already leads to double-parking and cars blocking the bike lane.
- Ride-sharing services further create gridlock on the block.
- The garage entrance and building entrance would further constrain street parking by taking several spaces away.

Proper use of alleys

- We applaud the creativity of the proposal, but believe that attempting to “activate” the alley with pedestrians is unsafe and unrealistic when the alley will still have to be open to cars and trucks.
- The developer proposes multiple loading docks on the alley, which will require garbage trucks, moving trucks, and delivery trucks to use the alley.
- This alley is already used by cars avoiding the lights at intersections to travel from V Street through to Florida Avenue and by many residents like us whose private parking spaces are in the alley.
- If a mix of cars and pedestrians is dangerous and cars can’t be banned, then pedestrians should not be added to the mix.
- We respect the support of our neighbors in The Hamilton at 1418 W Street to the plans to “activate” the alley to pedestrians, but respectfully argue that the alley still must function as an alley.

Noise

- Even the best garage doors make noise when opening and closing at all hours of the day and night so every effort should be made to select a quiet door system regardless of its location.

- Like residents at 1418 W Street, our houses and condominiums on our side of the street also have bedroom windows nearby the proposed garage entrance on W Street.
- Impatient cross-town drivers from 16th street and parts west race to make the light at 14th street and regularly honk their horns when residents have double-parked for loading/unloading purposes and when traffic doesn't move because cars are yielding to pedestrians legally crossing the street at 14th Street.
- The garage will have spaces open to the public adding to the volume of cars that travel W Street and adding to the street noise they cause.

Alternatives

- Return the garage entrance to the alley or 14th Street like other large residential buildings in the neighborhood.
- Widen the garage door from original plan to accommodate neighborhood feedback about a wider turning radius.
- Place the garage in center of the property at the intersection of the perpendicular alleys that meet behind the development.
- Place the garage entrance in the alley next to the Provision building because it's the least residential side of the proposed development and V street borders a government building and school.
- Make the alley one-way so that entering and exiting cars travel different directions.

Thank you for giving great weight to our strong opposition to this public space application. We share the concerns voiced by many of our neighbors that an approved application would have negative impacts on traffic flow, noise, and residential character.

Respectfully,

Brad Hicks
Ryan Dietrich
bradleyryanhicks@yahoo.com
(202) 986-3698