

## Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

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**Sent:** Friday, October 22, 2021 2:00 PM  
**To:** ATD DCOZ; DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)  
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**Subject:** Case #20472 River School Proposal - OPPOSITION

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Dear Chairman Hill and Members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment,

I have been a resident of DC since 2003 and I live with my family at 4444 Chesapeake Street, NW.

I write to ask you to deny the River School request for zoning exceptions, Case #20472, and to oppose the purchase, relocation and significant expansion of the school to 4220 Nebraska Avenue, NW.

The residential property that the River School would like to purchase is too small for their proposed plan and the traffic and safety issues in the surrounding area are too extreme to approve any project with such a large number of people, cars or traffic until the underlying causes of the traffic and safety issues are remedied. **And as you know, on October 14, 2021, ANC 3E voted 4-1 to oppose the River School Plan (TRS) given all of the long term traffic and safety impacts that the River School plan would have on the community.**

### **Key Facts:**

1. The property at 4220 Nebraska Ave, NW is zoned as R-1-B, a residential property in a residential zone.
2. The property is not designated as an historic estate.
3. The size and scope of the school would be too large for the 2.27 acre site.

4. The density of the The River School (TRS) proposal is far greater than allowed as a matter of right, and far too great for the property. While details of TRS' plans are difficult to obtain, the plans call for roughly 60,000 square feet of development. The property is approximately 2.27 acres in size, meaning the TRS proposal would yield a density of .61 FAR. Further, the proposal is for a total population approximately 450 people, including students, faculty and staff to the property each day just for the school. If the property were developed under matter of right parameters, this number would be far lower than 450. TRS' proposed density is greater than any comparable private school located in the District, except perhaps one (Edmund Burke). If you compare NPS or Washington International School for campus size; there is no real comparison.
5. The River School's BZA application for zoning exception does not include any discussion of the National Center for Hearing Innovation (NCHI), as it is called on their school website, or the "clinic" as they call it in public discussions, that was included in early documents provided to neighbors with a potential square footage of approximately either 9,300 or 14,000 square feet. The "clinic" would include an institute with researchers, training staff and visitors as well as meetings related to National hearing-loss related policies. This is not a school or childcare related activity and should have been included as an additional zoning exception requests. There have been no details provided about the planned size and scope of this center on the property in the past several months.
6. Several intersections around the residential home the River School would like to purchase have or will have (within the next 5 years) a failing rating of F1 or F2 and DDOT has no concrete plans to mitigate the existing problems. In the DDOT reports regarding the River School plan, their statement of no objection does not acknowledge the existing need for holistic traffic planning and remediation at many intersections prior to the approval of any new developments including the school being granted zoning exceptions. It is unconscionable to approve more development around intersections currently receiving an F (failing) rating and no funding or plans to remedy the problems. In addition, the DDOT and River School plans fail to note that there will be a bike lane constructed from Tenley to Ward Circle which will pass directly in front of the entry and egress of the 4220 Nebraska Ave property adding a new dangerous safety issue related to entering and exiting Nebraska Avenue.
7. More than 50 percent of the River School population is between the ages of 0-3. Children aged 0-3 cannot easily be bused to school so despite the River School's impassioned and creative presentations regarding their transportation and traffic mitigation strategies, the negative impact of the school on traffic and safety in the community would still be significant and their busing strategy, per head of school, Nancy Mellon in the September 2021 ANC 3E meeting, would be virtually impossible for them to actually put in place.
8. The River School representatives said that they will work with the community to develop performance measures, monitoring plans, sanctions, and even develop and pay for transportation mitigation strategies in the area surrounding 4220 Nebraska Ave, NW. Many schools and developers in the AU Park and Tenleytown neighborhoods have worked with neighborhood groups to develop community agreements. However, *once a school or development is in place, imposing restrictions and sanctions on these entities has proven almost impossible*. The community does not believe that the River School will be any different.

10. Missing from the DDOT, Office of Planning and Sustainability report submitted to the BZA on 10/18/2021, is an acknowledgement of years of requests from the Tenleytown and AU Park communities to address ANY of the EXISTING traffic and safety issues around 4220 Nebraska Ave, NW.
11. DDOT does not have any concrete plans to assess, plan, mitigate or fund any of the traffic and safety issues around 4220 Nebraska Ave, NW, that must be managed prior to approval of the River School zoning exception application. And, any mitigation strategies suggested by the River School would also be contingent upon approvals, available funds and neighborhood approvals and based in reality.
12. The information the River School has provided in their application and supporting documents is filled with inaccuracies, incomplete, misleading or false information and outdated data.
13. *River School does not currently have adequate funding to support this project. Any promises or neighborhood concessions they make cannot be guaranteed as all of their funding is contingent upon fund raising.*

I ask that you **do not approve** BZA Case # 20472.

The River School proposal to purchase, relocate and expand their school and child care center to 4220 Nebraska Ave, NW and add a large national research institute, is much too large and expansive for the zoning, size and scope of the property. The River School Plan would NOT be in general harmony with the purpose and intent of the zoning regulations and zoning maps, and will adversely affect the community by adding more traffic and safety issues in an already heavily burdened, high trafficked area which, due to the significant number of city-approved projects already underway, will be getting much worse.

Respectfully,  
Kristen Booth