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The following are some observations regarding the proposed Maret athletic fields on currently undeveloped grounds behind the Episcopal Center for Children at Nebraska Avenue and Utah.

A first glance, it seems that the baseball and multipurpose field along with a parking area is a very tight fit on this site. As a point of comparison, the recently reconfigured athletic fields and St. Albans School were planned and sited on a larger land area allowing for more significant buffering from adjacent private residences. Further, the St Albans athletic fields are bounded by 34th Street NW (a busy street) and Garfield Street a major bus route.

The proposed Maret facility backs directly to properties in on Nebraska Avenue, 28th Street and to the alley behind Rittenhouse Street. Aside from these problematic adjacencies the proposed site development poses serious issues, regarding increased traffic, noise pollution and importantly significant storm water issues that may not meet District of Columbia policy, my comments focus on the impacts of this project on the surrounding dwellings.

The plan documents and perspective images for the project are misleading. For example, it appears that large trees (possibly relocated) or new trees to be in "buffer" areas along the Rittenhouse Alley or the 28th Street property lines. It is unlikely that this will be an achievable reality. There is not enough space and in order to create level playing fields there will be substantial retaining walls. Their footings will likely only allow for some shrubbery not large trees everywhere. The claim that these landscaped buffers will mitigate noise pollution for adjacent residences seem at stretch at best.

Another impact of the insufficient buffering areas is related to the playing fields including the scoreboard structure and tall poles and netting to prevent balls from landing in backyards adjacent to the site. These structures could be easily impact second story views to the south and west. The site plan and perspective images also seem to minimize the consequences of leveling the site. A significant use of retaining walls will be required to create the workable grades for the playing fields and could likely impact adjacent properties with localized flooding during extreme weather events that are occurring more and more frequently. Some of these areas indicate area drains that would be ineffective without vigilant attention. The retaining walls also appear create difficult to access and maintain grass and planting areas that have the potential create problems for rodent control and a habitat for invasive plant species.

In conclusion, it is my professional opinion that BZA should not grant approve of this facility on this site. It appears to have small and large scale impacts that will adversely impact the adjacent homeowners and appears to me to run counter to the planning and environmental goals of the District of Columbia.

James S. Stokoe AIA  
Archetal  
jss@archetal.com