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Objecting to Maret School proposal to disrupt our neighborhood - Board of Zoning Adjustment Case #20643

1 message

Ari Roth <arirothdc@gmail.com>

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To: Randy.Speck@anc.dc.gov, 3G02@anc.dc.gov, dcoz@dc.gov, jlewisgeorge@dccouncil.us

Cc: Friends Of The Field <friendsofthefield20015@gmail.com>, Kate Schecter <kschecter@wn.org>

Bcc: carolindc1@gmail.com

January 16, 2022

Dear ANC 3/4G Chairman Speck
Commissioner Higgins
and Councilmember George,

I am writing to indicate my serious concerns regarding the imposition of the Maret School sports complex proposed for my neighborhood. I live 2 blocks from the Episcopal Educational Center. My wife, Dr. Kate Schecter, gardened on the EEC site as part of a small Community Garden Project initiated by EEC 3 years ago. That garden was razed 18 months ago. More recently, we are upset to have been blind-sided in learning only belatedly about the radical re-purposing of the playfield and garden for Maret School's benefit.

We understand that the EEC is hurting financially and needs a new income source to survive. But there are many ways to fund a private, special needs school that serves 20-25 students annually without permanently scarring the environment and altering the most bucolic aspect of our neighborhood. The proposed artificial, plastic turf and asphalt parking slots, aggressive tree clearing and ground flattening are indeed scars on the terrain, the environment, and on our neighborhood.

The scaling, netting, and concrete impositions are indicative of over-zealous development of a beautifully sloping playfield, radically transforming it into a preppy, pre-professional sports facility. Why harm nature as opposed to working with it? Forget flattening the field and uprooting trees. Make do with what nature has given us. The Maret proposal is an aesthetic offense against nature and tranquility. It feels both brazen and impudent in the face of our neighborhood's expression of protest against the over-assertive, hyper-ambitious design.

Further specific points:

1. It is environmentally insensitive to remove forty well-established trees and topsoil and replace them with 3.7 acres of artificial turf, with additional hardscape for parking and sidewalks. This will essentially destroy the contribution that natural vegetation and topsoil make to the environment. Artificial turf's contribution to the heat island effect is well-documented. Off-gassing, particulate distribution and other effects will remain in the

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environment long after the games are finished. When we see the effects of climate change, why would we contribute to it, and especially to this extent?

2. This proposal will create a safety problem for a neighborhood known for supporting and protecting its children (more than 50 of whom live next to the proposed complex). Everyday pick-up and drop-off for the sports complex will occur at the same time as heavy commuter traffic, and traffic generated by the Episcopal Center for Children when it reopens. The ECC plans to operate both a school and an after-school day care program. With Oregon Ave. returning to service after years of extensive renovation, and with Bingham Drive also expected to reopen, commuter traffic would increase considerably.

3. Maret and others' use of the site will overwhelm our neighborhood streets with traffic and parked cars nearly every day. Game days will bring congestion and noise akin to what we experience from other nearby fields, most notably St. John's College High School less than a mile away. The two sports facilities might frequently have concurrent "game days," compounding the problem.

4. The proposal seeks too much lot coverage and too much development and activity on a small site with too little in the way of visual and sound buffers. The huge footprint would overwhelm the scale of the neighborhood; the intensity of land use would be unprecedented in our city. The request for zoning relief to allow this activity in an R-1-B zoning district runs counter to zoning principles and the fabric of our neighborhood. This zoning designation is intended to protect and stabilize quiet residential areas suitable for family life. The request for a special exception to allow parking 50 cars in the "front yard" facing Nebraska Avenue would be completely out of keeping with the single-family character of this neighborhood.

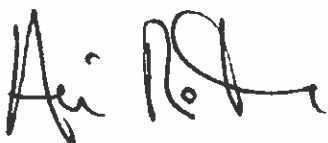
5. High retaining walls required to level the 35-foot elevation change across the site would dwarf the scale of our homes.

6. Noise is also a primary concern. The maximum allowable sound level in this zoning district is 60 dB, and sports activities regularly exceed that limit.

7. Maret's intention to use the site for its own teams, and to sub-lease the facility to other sports teams and leagues will have neighbors facing the issues raised above nearly every day of the year with no relief.

I object to Maret's proposal to disrupt our neighborhood - for the above stated reasons. In addition, I do not want this to set a precedent for future development in our city.

Respectfully,



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