

2016 01 10

PROPOSED MPCA Position in opposition to the Proposed EYA development of the St Joseph's Seminary property.

Summary:

We respect and value the work and mission of the St. Joseph's Seminary. We consider them good neighbors and wish for them all the best. Nevertheless, the density proposed by the EYA Planned Unit Development (PUD) and the resulting exacerbation of existing traffic problems, lead us to reluctantly come to the conclusion that, for the long term good and health of Michigan Park, we cannot support the current PUD application.

1. Introduction

- a. Michigan Park Citizens Association (MPCA) has been continuously active in Michigan Park since its founding in 1917. Many members are decades-long residents.
- b. The property is prominently and centrally located within MPCA's boundaries. We have a strong and vested concern in its proposed development. Its development is of considerable consequence to our community.
- c. We recognize the Josephites' need and their right to realize the value of their investment in their property.
- d. We trust that a development design can be found that benefits the Josephites, safeguards neighborhood well-being and character and is a net positive for all concerned.

2. Open Space and Historic Preservation

- a. As noted in the Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 24, Section 10), there is a dearth of publicly-owned open space in Ward 5. The loss of privately-held open space such as the yards of St Joseph's is significant to the entire neighborhood. We would prefer the DC Government would rise to this and other opportunities to purchase privately-held open land to augment the inadequate stock of public open land in Ward 5.
- b. We applaud the intention of St Joseph's to apply for Historic Preservation Landmark status for the seminary building. We similarly welcome placing easements on the front and side yards of the Seminary building. The dedication of these yards to open space and to public use in perpetuity is a welcome and significant contribution to the public good of our neighborhood. It is our expectation that these easements will be permanent and irrevocable.

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3. Zoning and Architecture

- a. The current zoning of the property is R-2. The introductory section of Chapter 3 of the 2016 Zoning Code reads in part:

300.4 The purpose of the R-2 zone is to:

(a) Provide for areas with semi-detached dwellings; and

(b) Protect these areas from invasion by denser types of residential development.

- i. In considering this PUD and its impact on our neighborhood we urge the Zoning Commission to keep in mind this primary intention of the Zoning Code.
- b. The neighborhood in the immediate vicinity predates the 1958 zoning and exceeds its density, specifically; the triplex house groups exceed the current R-2 standards.
- c. The PUD proposal for row dwellings in the north yard of St Joseph's is in excess of even the existing housing stock. A reduction in the number of units in the perimeter rank of the PUD can allow a mix of triplexes and duplexes that will produce a more gradual and successful transition to increased density.
- d. We oppose the change in zoning to R-1A as being inconsistent with the goal to protect existing R-2 zoned areas against denser types of residential development.
- e. EYA has chosen a contextual approach to the architectural design of the project.
 - i. However, this deference to context is limited to surface matters and stops short in terms of the development's density and number of stories in building height.
 - ii. Arranging the outer rank of dwellings in groups of two and three with space between them is significantly more contextual.
 - iii. EYA has emphasized that the proposed height of the dwellings is only marginally higher than the surrounding houses. This restraint is laudable.
 1. However, in significant contrast to the surrounding residential context, the current façade designs present a full three stories to the street. This subverts the attempt at contextual architecture.
 2. The inclusion of penthouses and roof decks exacerbate the incompatible height differences with the immediately surrounding neighborhood.

4. Traffic and Parking

- a. Traffic:
 - i. Michigan Park currently experiences significant, heavy traffic that worsens at rush hour and hospital shift changes.
 - ii. The Gorove Slade traffic study, in its Peak Hour Vehicular Capacity Analysis Results, notes:
 1. **Three** instances in which the current level of service (LOS) is rated as unacceptable (Levels 3 and 4).

2. The number of unacceptable instances is expected to increase to **five** without the PUD.
 3. This bad and deteriorating situation can't handle even the slight traffic increase that the study expects the development to produce.
- iii. We note that the bulk of traffic issues in Michigan Park are generated by commuters driving to downtown and to local destinations. The extension of Webster Street through to 12th Street alters traffic patterns on 12th, 13th, Allison and Webster Streets.

The efforts by EYA to engage the community to develop traffic mitigation is welcome. We withhold judgment on this issue pending outcome of these efforts. We would encourage a livability study that would take into account the effect of this development's proposed density with the density of other recent developments on South Dakota Avenue. These other developments will have a major traffic impact on 12th Street that was not taken into account in the Gorove Slade study.

b. Parking

- i. Gorove Slade outlines on pages 8-10 several options for 12th Street on-street parking. MPCA has expressed concerns about the PUD's guest parking, but on further examination changes such as curbside parking and/or bicycle lanes are being proposed with insufficient attention to Providence Hospital's needs.
- ii. Any changes along 12th Street must consider and account for:
 1. Safety and access to the emergency room for emergency and law enforcement vehicles approaching from both the north and the south.
 2. Clearance and adequate turning space for the extra large delivery vehicles and mobile medical vehicles to the loading docks and parking lots on the 12th Street side of the hospital.
 3. Any changes to the design of the 4400 block of 12th Street need the review and approval of Providence Hospital.

Conclusion:

Reluctantly, MPCA has come to the conclusion that for the long term good and health of our neighborhood we cannot support the current PUD application unless and until the above concerns are significantly and successfully addressed. The impact to open space, historic preservation, zoning, architecture, traffic and parking is tremendous. This development will have a dramatic change to the character of our neighborhood.