

Melinda C. Stewart

From: Steven F Goldstone <sfg@silverspringgroup.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 19, 2019 6:35 PM
To: Melinda C. Stewart
Subject: Fwd: Re Montessori Children's School Application

Dear City Officials,

We are writing in opposition to the above Application, which seeks to convert a single- family home at 1217 Varela Street (we reside directly across the street at 1214 Varela) into school facilities as part of an expansion plan. This application should be denied because it does not come close to meeting the basic requirements of the Code (section 122-6) that a conditional use application such as this shall only be permitted " where the proposed use may be adequately accommodated without generating adverse impacts on properties and land uses within the immediate vicinity". The burden is on the applicant to demonstrate that its project is "compatible and harmonious" with and will not adversely affect the immediate vicinity.

This application cannot and does not meet that standard. From my conversations with neighbors, there is universal agreement that the quality and character of our residential neighborhood in the historic district would suffer in material ways if this expansion were approved. The letter dated September 20, 2019 from our neighbors, Jane Lowe and Alan Lewis, sets out in some detail the negative impact the School's expansion would have on our neighborhood and we will not burden you with a separate recitation of those problems, but we do agree that those problems are real, that they are substantial and that they pose an insurmountable obstacle to the approval of this application.

Another fatal flaw of the application is that it is entirely premised on the removal of an existing residence in the Historic Residential District, which is in direct conflict with a fundamental goal of the City's Comprehensive Plan: the preservation of housing in the historic district (Goal IA-5.1 Protect Preservation of Housing)

The loss of a single residence - - as important as that is - - is not all that is at stake here. Whether we as neighbors can maintain the residential character of the entire block is also very much at issue with this application. Over the years each of us has invested much to maintain and renew our homes, all in conformance with the guidelines and directions of the Historic

Commission. The neighbors on this block have managed to create and maintain a residential atmosphere consistent with that throughout the Historic District (notwithstanding the ongoing playground noise, traffic and other disruptions from the School). Liz and I in fact have been in discussions for sometime with the City about our funding a project to plant trees along both sides of our block on Varela in an effort to add to the quiet enjoyment of the block's historic and residential character. If the School's expansion plan were to proceed, more than half of one side of our block would be devoted to a non-residential commercial activity. What we have been trying to accomplish as a neighborhood will be frustrated completely *

For all the above reasons, and for the reasons set out by Jane and Allen in their letter, we ask that the School's application be rejected.

Sincerely,
Liz and Steve Goldstone

* Here is just one example of such likely frustration: the School today has a six-foot high fence running in front of its property on Varela St. and it proposes to continue that fence along its new property, thus running in a line well more than 50% of the block on Varela. The height of this fence - - appropriate and necessary to protect the safety and privacy of students and critically important to the neighbors to provide at least some visual and noise separation from School activities - - is not at all appropriate to a residential block in the Historic District. In fact, it is expressly prohibited along property fronts in the District by the Historic Commission. Thus, while neighbors on this block meticulously comply with standards of the Historic Commission regarding their own residences, they are forced to live with a commercial-sized fence simply because the School has historically been permitted to operate where it is and the fence is understandably needed. But the fact that such an inappropriate fence is needed is reason enough to reject a plan that would involve a significant expansion of its use.