

Cleveland Park Citizens Association

George Idelson, President
3035 Newark Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
202-362-4279
g.idelson@verizon.net

November 4, 2003

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street NW #2108
Washington, D 20001

Re: Case #16970

Testimony of George Idelson, President, Cleveland Park Citizens Association

The National Child Research Center. From the name you might expect a cluster of buildings sprawled on a campus on Rockville Pike. Perhaps, some day, it will achieve that ambition. For now, it is a small pre-school, nestled on a tiny cul de sac in an historic residential district in DC. There by sufferance of a special exception, it has, for many happy years, lived in a symbiotic relationship with its neighbors. You nurture our children, we nurture you.

But lately that warm neighborly relationship has soured. In part it was the increased number of students from Virginia and Maryland and the growing traffic jams they incur, and more recently, the idea of turning Highland Place into a one-way street to accommodate the traffic flow. Or the word games the school played with their enrollment figures. Or simply the deep apprehension of the neighbors that, say what you will, doubling the footprint of the school and adding still more students and staff, was an inevitable prelude to further step-by-step expansion. We're not naïve. How could it be otherwise?

For me, as president of the Cleveland Park Citizens Association, it came together on that fateful Saturday in February when the space shuttle blew apart. Our association was meeting that morning to listen to the arguments for and against the expansion. Surely the meeting would be a bust, I thought. Yet the neighbors left their TV sets to sit through several hours of debate. Instead of an empty house, almost every seat was filled. And when it came time to vote, the message was loud and clear. The citizens of Cleveland Park want you to reject this application for expansion.

So I am here today to tell you, to plead with you, to listen to the community. Listen to our Council Member Kathy Patterson and At Large Member Phil Mendelson who have direct knowledge of this situation and have come to the same conclusion. Reject this application.

While the homes, the trees, the lack of sidewalks in Cleveland Park reflect the past, we are not against change. This is not Rockville Pike.

We love this school and want it to succeed. But we don't want the tail to wag the dog. In my judgment, the best way to help NCRC achieve its goals is to reject this application. Then, and perhaps only then, will the school sit down with its neighbors and work out a modus vivendi. Next to the school is the Cleveland Park Club with potentially rentable space. Perhaps giving neighborhood children, especially those who could walk to school, a clear priority in registration would ease the situation.

Testifying against a neighbor isn't easy for me. Saying "No" may not be easy for you. If I can do it, you can do it.

Sincerely,

George Idelson
President

Encl: CPCA Resolution Opposing NCRC Expansion