

Dec 11, 2018

To: City of Seattle
Office of Hearing Examiner
PO Box 94729
Seattle, WA 98124-4729

We hereby appeal the City decision to grant Holy Names a green light to build a multi-story large commercial size parking lot in the center of a quaint and historic residential neighborhood and to destroy a beautiful historic park on the North side of its premises which has been used by the neighborhood for years as a green space. This appeal is filed on behalf of the undersigned names, and on behalf of the more than 100 families who reside in the immediate vicinity of the school and who signed a written petition in opposition to the project, voicing their strong disapproval of the school's plans to build an oversized parking lot and to destroy the green space on the north side of the school. We are extremely disappointed with the City's decision but are perhaps more disappointed with Holy Names. We were hoping that someone would do the right thing and consider the historical and environmental impact this project will have on our neighborhood, as well as the input from the immediate neighbors who are overwhelmingly opposed to these retrograde plans. But in the end, money speaks volumes and the school apparently intends to proceed as if the neighbors do not exist and are not worthy of listening to. As surprising as it is, that has been their plain message which has not been lost on any of us.

Liz Swift, Head of School, was quoted in a recent publication as saying *"As a long-time steward of this community, we look forward to continuing our collaboration with neighbors, students, families, alumnae and other stakeholders as this critical and sustainable school-improvement project moves through construction."*

Really? Collaborating? As for neighbors, we know of zero collaboration in response to the petition. In April 2018, we submitted to the school a petition which was signed by over 100 families in the immediate vicinity of the school, including many long-time neighbors, who spoke with a clear and unified voice as follows:

PETITION SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

We, being good neighbors of Holy Names Academy, earnestly oppose the present planned construction of a multi-level parking garage on the site and the erasure of the beautiful park on the north side of the school, which is deeply valued green space. We believe both proposals are inimical to our neighborhood.

ACTION PETITIONED FOR

We believe the plans will introduce additional vehicle traffic to our area, will result in additional congestion, are over scale, will be a blight, especially on the north end of the property where the cherished, revered, and historic park will be paved with a parking lot, will cause unwanted noise and lighting on adjacent homes, will bring noxious fumes and construction and wreak havoc in the adjacent area during and after a lengthy period of construction, and is plainly contrary to environmentally conscious policy of encouraging less driving, not more. We, the undersigned, oppose the current plans and wish our voices to be heard and respected. If the school cares about the neighbors as it professes, we ask that its current plans be reconsidered, that additional inclusive discussion be held, and that rational alternatives be pursued.

This petition reflected a lot of thought by the neighbors. The signatures were collected by no less than 10 people. We walked from the school outwards, covering those streets contiguous to the school, and fanning out to north Capitol Hill and south. Most of the signees are long-time residents. We stopped at 125 signees as that seemed a sufficient enough sampling. We found over 90% support for the Petition of those we encountered.

The school's reaction to the Petition was to fully ignore it. To pretend it did not exist. There was zero effort to engage with the neighbors over their concerns set forth in the Petition. We were simply ignored so that the school can proceed with its plans to black top a beautiful park and create a vast underground parking area so that people can begin driving to the school and parking their vehicles in far greater number than before and on weekends. This is common sense and the school knows it.

For years, there has been a balance of mutual respect and benevolence between the school and those who surround it. This has helped the school succeed. It has been a positive and affirming force. The current plans destroy that balance with the community. There has been zero genuine effort to discuss these issues or to compromise in any way. We believe that was a real mistake. Rather than search for a compromise that might have been acceptable to all, the school just does not care about the neighbors, or their genuine concern for the environmental impact of the project. And we do not mean whether or not you receive a green "go" pass from the city. You are a school. You are entrusted with education. Building a parking lot to encourage driving, which is what you are doing, is plainly counter to considerations of greenhouse gases, and will just throw Holy Names' divine weight behind the further destruction of our environment. This will be clear to your students in years to come. We believe they will see this project as a mistake as well. They will see what was done to their environment, and the many missed opportunities there were to each for other alternatives. Their own green space will be gone. Once you eliminate the park that has been here since 1906, it will be gone forever. This should matter. Voices matter.

What happens when others feel unheard, unvalued, and disregarded, is quite negative, and should be no surprise. We oppose the current plans. We think they are ill-conceived. We have been wholly ignored, but our voices will continue and should the school proceed in this manner, it can expect the neighbors to continue to protest the activity in the many means that are available in a public space and where there are students as well as others who are capable of understanding.

Accordingly, we ask that the matter be further considered, that there be a greater search for common ground, and that actions are undertaken which will mend rather than portend to further disruption of the relationship between the school and its neighbors. We believe this matter will only become increasingly disruptive and divisive if the matter proceeds on its current path.

As for the city, we specifically appeal the decision that: "The city has determined there will be no probable significant adverse environmental impacts from this proposal." This conclusion is bereft of facts and makes no sense to us. When the school embarked upon a far more limited expansion quite recently, all of the neighborhood homes surrounding the school shook during the construction and the homes were impacted. This is a far more massive project. Far out of scale and beyond what the Bush School did and beyond what University Prep did to address parking challenges. A 5-story underground garage is a massive undertaking that will unearth ground and disturb the adjacent homes in a far more profound level. Massive pick-up trucks will transport dirt out using our old streets. This is significant impact. In addition, there will be long-term impact as we believe the plans will undoubtedly introduce additional vehicle traffic to our area and will result in additional congestion. We do not understand how you could have reached an opposite conclusion, since it is common sense that "if you build it, they will come". In addition, we believe the construction will result in a blight, especially on the north end of the property where the historic park will be paved with a parking lot. We believe all of this is plainly contrary to environmentally conscious policy of encouraging less driving, not more. Seattle talks about wanting less cars, and encouraging people to walk, take the bus, etc. As for the City's mission statement, we only wish this were true: "As stewards and regulators of land and buildings, we preserve and enhance the equity, livability, safety and health in our communities."

We remain vehemently opposed to these plans and will continue to resist them as we believe we are duty-bound to do as stewards of the neighborhood.

Merry Christmas.

Shannon Martin
Bill Gildea
Pat Griswold
Kate Pollock
Josh Pollock
Ron Friedman
Lili Sacks
Carol Hannum
Aze Hannum
Tim Anstey
Liz Nichols