

Alcova Heights Citizens' Association

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May 5, 2017

Ms. Alexis Gray, NEPA Compliance Specialist
Office of Planning and Design Quality
U.S. General Services Administration, National Capital Region
301 7th Street, SW / Suite 40044
Washington, DC 20407

Subject: Final Environmental Assessment, National Foreign Affairs Training Center Master Plan Update

Dear Ms. Gray:

I'm submitting these comments on behalf of the Alcova Heights Citizens Association. The National Foreign Affairs Training Center sits within our neighborhood boundaries. We continue to have concerns about a number of topics that are addressed in the Final Environmental Assessment:

Sledding Hill:

The Alcova Heights Citizens Association would very much like to see what we call the 'sledding hill' remain open for our neighborhood children. For many years, this hill has been a joy in the winter for generations of children. As proposed the realignment of the fence around the property boundary adjacent to South Quincy Street will prevent the use of the hill for sledding. We ask that the fence follow a different alignment that will allow the hill to continue to be used for sledding. The attached drawing shows how the fence could be constructed to provide the required setback for the childcare facility while leaving the hill for the neighborhood children.

Perimeter Security:

The Final EA states that the visual and aesthetic impact of the new perimeter fence is considered to be minimal. However, no information has been provided that details the impact of the construction of the fence. Given that it runs through wooded areas adjacent to quite a few of our homes, the potential for damage or even removal of trees seems to be likely. However the EA is silent on the matter, and equally silent on what remediation would be performed to restore those areas once construction is complete.

Light and Noise Pollution:

As we noted in our comments on the Draft EA, the residents who are adjacent to the NFATC are subject now to light and noise pollution from the NFATC with more development proposed. Maintaining a healthy forested buffer is critical to reducing the light pollution from the parking lot lighting systems and reducing the noise from the traffic on the property. Not only does the existing tree buffer need to be better maintained and managed, but additional trees need to be added along the perimeter between South Quincy Street and South 3rd Street. The additional tree cover that is proposed in the EA is too heavily clustered immediately around the buildings. Either additional trees need to be added along the perimeter or the trees proposed in the EA need to be shifted to the perimeter.

Traffic and Parking:

We continue to take strong exception to the results of the traffic analysis in the EA, as well as your plans to handle the additional personnel without adding any additional parking. You are increasing the amount of building space by approximately 50% and yet you state the number of personnel on site will only increase by 20%. Those two numbers alone don't add up. On top of that, all of the existing parking is currently being utilized. You contend that your transportation management plan will negate the need for any additional parking while at the same time you admit that there will be an increase in traffic. Where is that additional traffic going to park?

As we mentioned in our previous comments, the Army made similar promises when they expanded their facility, but traffic problems have increased significantly since the facility was occupied. Parking now spills down George Mason Drive as a result, and we remain convinced that we will see more vehicles parked in the adjoining neighborhoods. The largest single problem is that mass transit options to the site are very limited and are not a viable option for the vast majority of those travelling to the

NFATC. Walking and biking while repeatedly mentioned as transportation alternatives are not are viable options for most of your staff and students and are highly unlikely to result in any meaningful number of trips.

We also continue to object to the Federal government's unwillingness to take any responsibility for necessary road improvements at the 6th Street entrance and to its insistence that Arlington County and its taxpayers must pay for those improvements - which solely benefit the NFATC.

Proposed Path:

The possibility of a new path along the perimeter of the State Department property linking Quincy Street to South 3rd Street has been raised and discussed with the State Department. That discussion continues. The Alcova Heights Citizens Association voted to form a committee to investigate the option of building a new path. However, the adjacent property owners have stated unanimous opposition to it.

Lastly, we appreciate the effort by the State Department to meet with members of our community on some of the issues referenced here. We look forward to a continued dialogue with the State Department to ensure that issues resulting from the operation and redevelopment of the site will be satisfactorily addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Final EA. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me. I can be reached at landerallin@gmail.com or 703-350-8648.

Sincerely,

Lander Allin
President, Alcova Heights Citizens Association

cc: Don Beyer, U.S. Representative
Jay Fiset, Chair, Arlington County Board

Hypothetical Scenario to Preserve Neighborhood Sledding Hill

