

Hello,

My name is Rob Galanakis. I am a resident of the Mt Tabor neighborhood. I am the Glencoe Elementary PTA President, and a Mt Tabor Neighborhood Association board member. I have extensive experience with this site. Both of my children went to Childsworld preschool when it was located at St Stephen's; my wife was on the Childsworld Board of Directors; this site is in Glencoe's catchment zone; and I lead our Bike Bus through this area.

I have reviewed the Land Use Proposal and I take issue with several findings which are either factually inaccurate; look hypothetically at the previous use as a parish school and ignore the experience of anyone who dealt with the site when it was a preschool; or overlook how this site connects to the larger transportation network.

First, the proposal states that the site "housed a daycare center," but this is inaccurate. It actually housed Portland's largest preschool, which was closed in 2021, mostly due to parking issues, and after repeated conflict with neighbors about site access. This preschool was actually mentioned in the book "Paved Paradise: How Parking Explains the World" by Henry Grabar, which was released last year. The report notes that the planned use may generate fewer car trips than the preschool, but this is not investigated. Instead, the report conveniently decides to compare the proposed use to the previous use over 20 years ago. Doing so throws out a far more relevant and recent history.

Second, the proposal states that "there have been no injuries or fatalities at any of the intersections that surround the St. Stephens site." This is true only in the most literal sense—move one intersection west on Taylor, from 41st to 39th, and you will find a memorial where Jeanie Diaz was killed by a driver in July 2023.

Third, the proposal correctly mentions the site is located at the intersection of two Major City Bikeways, which are the 41st Avenue Greenway and Taylor Greenway. It also explains that "Neighborhood Greenways are low-traffic and low-speed streets where the City gives priority to people walking, bicycling, and rolling. Neighborhood greenways form the backbone of the city's Safe Routes to School network and connect neighborhoods, parks, schools, and business districts."

According to PBOT's traffic counts, Taylor was receiving an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volume of over 500 cars per day while the preschool was in operation. ADT has fallen in the past few years. Using the same 2.17 trips/student formula the proposal uses, this will approximately double ADT on these Greenways.

The proposal states that, of adding 350 ADT, "any impacts the proposal will have on the pedestrian, bicycle and transit circulation systems will be positive since the project includes improvements to public sidewalk corridor on the surrounding streets." This is totally at odds with the rest of the report, which stresses that "no changes to the existing streets or sidewalks are anticipated," and indeed, the site will not require improvements of any type.

Fourth, the proposal repeatedly states that there will be no impact to the neighborhood, but this is only true in relation to a use which hasn't been seen in 20+ years. To take one simple example: the traffic circulation plan involves having a line of up to 160 cars drop students off in front of the school. This line could extend for almost 4,000 ft. This is twice the distance on 41st between Hawthorne and Belmont. It is simply impossible for a curb-side dropoff to not severely and negatively impact street operations on these Greenways. For comparison, Childsworld preschool, which again was evicted largely over parking issues, did not have curbside drop-off, and had staggered start times, so the traffic impact was less compared to the long car drop-off lines we'll inevitably see here. A finding of no impact isn't looking very hard.

These Greenways are, as mentioned, the backbone of our Safe Routes to School network. I ride Taylor and 41st almost every day. Dozens of Glencoe students use them to get to school. They already compete with cut-through drivers, using these Greenways to bypass congestion on Hawthorne, Belmont, and Cesar Chavez. Compete is the wrong word, because we're talking about 9 year olds on bikes versus distracted parents in 4,000 lb steel boxes. It is irresponsible to prioritize out-of-town drivers over the safety of the students and families that live in this city.

Furthermore, these Greenways are the closest to Hawthorne Blvd. When Hawthorne was repaved, we did not install bike lanes, instead preferring to divert bike traffic to nearby Greenways, like Taylor. Putting another 320 car trips on this Greenway is at odds with PBOT and Safe Routes's core transportation strategy.

I do not believe approving this Conditional Use is compatible with the safe transportation of neighborhood families and schools. To make it so would require considerable mitigations:

- There cannot be curbside dropoff on a Neighborhood Greenway, as the circulation plan proposes. This is fundamentally incompatible with the street operating as a Greenway. The traffic circulation plan should move drop-off to Salmon Street. Perhaps they can add a driveway from Salmon to their extensive parking lot. But this should be St Stephen's problem to solve, neighborhood families getting to and from school should not bear the brunt of the impact.
- Modal filters must be installed at Hawthorne and 41st to prohibit northbound traffic. The trip along 41st between Hawthorne and Taylor is treacherous for people on bikes when they deal with drivers trying to avoid congestion on Chavez. There are no reasons cars need to access 41st northbound.
- Traffic calming must be installed at 42nd and Taylor. Many drivers roll through this turn, especially turning left towards the Site. There are many forms this could take, but we need some infrastructure that requires drivers to slow here.
- Speed bumps must be installed on 45th Avenue, which would also see considerable ADT increase. 45th has a similar ADT as the Greenways, and is a City Bikeway (though its status should really be a Major City Bikeway as it is part of Taylor's connection to the 53rd Greenway). Note as well these are Safe Routes to School Primary Investment Routes.

- There should not be an exemption from the Bicycle Parking Code. The lack of bicycle parking, and the overall reduction of bike access here, creates a self-fulfilling prophecy that nearly all students will be driven to school, and all staff will drive.

Since this Conditional Use will increase ADT to unacceptable levels on these vital Neighborhood Greenways, it should be required that the impact, which runs counter to every goal and plan the City of Portland has about transportation planning, be mitigated by the applicant.

Thank you,
Rob Galanakis

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Mt Tabor Neighborhood Association Board Member
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