

From: [Matthew Woodruff](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Smarties Expansion
Date: Monday, May 8, 2023 9:52:18 AM

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To the Planning Commission:

My name is Matthew Woodruff, and I am a resident of the City of Decatur living at 124 Erie Avenue. Our house is directly across the street from Smarties Daycare which is currently seeking approval for expansion at tomorrow's meeting, May 9th. We also make use of the Smarties facility – two of our children currently attend the daycare. As a result, we are in a unique (if not tenuous) position of being able to evaluate both the business and the potential neighborhood impact based on first-hand experience.

I would start by saying that the care that Smarties provides is excellent. Its ethic as a company (mostly) fits well with the Decatur community, and we have now sent three children through their care. It is an expensive place to send a child, but we have found the level of care and convenient proximity to our house to be worth the expense. We view the business as an asset to the neighborhood.

However, while the business is a good one and should be generally supported as a positive component of the community, the expansion application process has raised a number of concerns that have raised alarm amongst ourselves and our neighbors. While I'm certain that many of my neighbors will choose to speak out on various important components of the plan tomorrow (commercial development of a residential neighborhood, tree clearing, traffic increases, watershed, etc.), the larger concern that I have developed as I have watched this process play out is transparency.

A little more than a year ago, Smarties approached your Commission to rezone the building to 'institutional'. This was necessary because the church that had long resided in the building was failing, and should it fail completely, operating a daycare at the site would be out of zoning compliance. At the time, there was concern among residents that the rezoning would pave the way for future commercial development within a residential neighborhood. To alleviate that concern, Smarties agreed to a cap of 149 students and stated that they had no plans to alter the existing building structure. This assurance, alongside resident's understanding that future additions would have to be approved by the Board of Commissioners was sufficient to alleviate most concerns.

Those assurances were not made in good faith. Smarties has now stated publicly in a meeting with neighbors that the building was purchased with the intent to expand, and that statements to the contrary at Planning Committee meetings were the result of 'miscommunications' by the company's council. Eight months later, Smarties presented a 3-story addition to the existing church structure before the HPC that proposed an additional 150 children – effectively doubling its capacity and exceeding the current capacity of Clairemont Elementary up the street by a third. Importantly, that proposal was submitted without informing the local community or the parents with children at Smarties of the proposed changes. That proposal was rejected by the HPC.

Around that time, families at Smarties were contacted to provide letters of support for the expansion of the business. The solicitation for those letters included a description of the increased capacity, as well as additional amenities to be provided by the business such as a parent coffee bar, a take-home meal service, and upgraded general facilities. It did not include proposed floor plans or exterior renderings of the new space, and there was no discussion about the large scope of construction needed for the project. As a result, the letters of support from parents obtained by the business are reflective of desires by parents for an enhanced care experience, without consideration of the impact that the construction project would have on the existing neighborhood. After Smarties' deferral last month to the current meeting date, a second round of emails was sent requesting a letter of support from each family at the school, and volunteers to speak at the meeting on Smarties' behalf. These parents will undoubtedly speak highly of the business, as they should (and we do!). However, they have not been brought into the planning process, given perspective on the size and scope of the change, or even given the opportunity to evaluate how this large construction project would impact their own children's care. I have spoken privately with parents professionally involved in commercial construction about the proposal, and they all express concern.

This lack of transparency has also played itself out in discussions with the community in an attempt to rally support for the expansion. While the focus of those efforts has centered on the need for high quality daycare in Decatur, it has noticeably lacked discussion around the extended functionality of the space. This is important because some of those

amenities, such as a venue for parents to potentially rent out for birthday parties and other functions, might significantly impact traffic and usage of the building that is not reflected in the current business model. Details around any of those plans have not been disclosed to the community, and so neighbors have become rightly concerned around the building's use should the project be approved.

In all, the impression that I have come away with having seen both sides of this proposal is that there is a large, well-developed vision for Smarties underlying this proposal process that is being very selectively communicated to stakeholders depending on the company's need to push the process forward. The company has shown a willingness to mislead your Commission for approval in the past, and has even acted without city approval in the past in clear cutting trees behind the property. Parents and neighbors have not been consulted until it has been politically necessary, and there is no reason to believe that either group has been provided a clear picture of the scope or intent of this project. It is concerning, for example, that the updated proposal cuts a third of the proposed additional students, but reduces the proposed building footprint by significantly less than that – does she intend to come back to you later for additional capacity? Does the child care component of the expansion only reflect a small component of the overall plan?

It is my belief that the childcare provided by Smarties is a valuable asset to the community. However, it is also my belief that discussion of this proposal has not adequately addressed the structure's ultimate intended use, and that that lack of transparency is by intention. As a result, it reflects a significant threat of commercialization of Erie Avenue and I cannot support it.

Sincerely,

Matthew Woodruff
124 Erie Avenue

From: dianaevansberman@aol.com
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Smarties Academy amended use of land petition
Date: Monday, May 8, 2023 4:57:00 PM

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Andrea:

As a resident of the Great Lakes neighborhood, I am opposed to an expansion of the Smarties Academy building and student population. The Academy's renewed proposal says the changes they are requesting will cause "no adverse effects" on surrounding properties or traffic to the area. I disagree. It is already hard to get in and out onto Clairemont with the current number of students at the Academy. There is traffic already from the elementary school down the street and I believe increasing the number of cars will negatively change the character of our historic residential neighborhood.

I am also concerned about the number of trees that would be cut down and that there would be more pavement added which can cause drainage issues.

The Smarties Academy had already been granted to increase the number of students in the past. I believe increasing this further would be a burden on our neighborhood especially the nearby homes. Even with the pared down building as described the nature of the neighborhood would change and make it look more commercial. The beautiful church building which adds to the character of the neighborhood would be diminished to the point of almost being invisible.

Thank you for passing this on to the members of the Planning Commission prior to the May 9 meeting.

Sincerely,

Diana Evans Berman
128 Champlain Street

Decatur, GA 30030

From: [PAUL WAGNER](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Comments on Smarties Academy Expansion Request
Date: Sunday, May 7, 2023 10:15:38 PM

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Ms. Angela Threadgill

Decatur Planning Commission

Good Day, Ms. Threadgill:

Please forward these comments on the Smarties Academy May 2, 2023, Amended Conditional Use Permit Application for the property at 465 Claremont Avenue in Decatur, to the entire Decatur Planning Commission.

We urge the Planning Commission to deny the request by Smarties to expand its enrollment from 148 students to 300 students for the following reasons.

Traffic

The February 17, 2023 Traffic Impact Study (TIS) prepared for Smarties by A & R Engineering raises significant questions about the impact of the Smarties expansion on traffic in the area. The TIS evaluates impacts in terms of Level of Service or LOS. The TIS describes LOS categories for unsignalized intersections as follows (page 4):

LOS A - "excellent operations with little delay to motorists"

LOS B -

LOS C -

LOS D -

LOS E -

LOS F - “insufficient gaps of acceptable size to allow vehicles on the side street to cross the main road without experiencing long delays”

2023 traffic operations

Table 3 of the TIS finds that approaches to the Clairemont/Erie intersection and the Erie/Smarties driveway intersection are operating in 2023 at a LOS C or better, and in many cases are LOS A.

2025 build out traffic operations

Table 7 of the TIS finds that for the build alternative, the Smarties expansion, traffic on Erie approaching Clairemont falls to a LOS E in AM and PM periods, but in the absence of the Smarties expansion, the LOS would remain at C or better. Note that at dismissal time, the LOS is C for both build and no build alternatives.

2030 build out traffic operations

Table 8 of the TIS finds that for the build alternative, traffic on Erie approaching Clairemont falls to a LOS F in AM and PM periods, but in the absence of the Smarties expansion, the LOS would be D or C for the same periods. Note that at dismissal time, the LOS is C for both build and no build alternatives.

The analysis described in the TIS indicated that the Smarties expansion is associated with greater traffic congestion along Erie Avenue in both the near and long term.

Impact of lower enrollment in amended application

At the neighborhood meeting hosted by Smarties May 4, we were told that the Smarties permit application had been amended to change the requested increase in enrollment from 300 to 255 students. This change is not reflected in the Conditional Use Permit Application containing a May 2, 2023, amended date that we have

seen. Assuming that this is an oversight, our comments above based on the TIS analysis for 300 students remain because the traffic evaluation on which the TIS was based was conducted on Tuesday, January 17, 2023 (TIS page 6). This was the day after the Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday, during a week when some families with preschool children might have been traveling, benefitting from thinner crowds as families with elementary school age children were home to allow their children to return to school. Hence, traffic may have been lighter than normal on the day of the study, thereby possibly leading to underestimates of traffic congestion in the study.

Expanding Commercial Use Inconsistent with Residential Neighborhood

In March 2022, Smarties was granted a Conditional Use Permit that limited enrollment in its day care business to 148 students. That limit was imposed at least in part due to neighborhood concerns that this was a commercial operation in a residential area. Nevertheless, less than a year later, in January 2023, Smarties submitted a new application to expand enrollment to 300 students.

The latest iteration of Smarties' plans calls for

- a new building that more than doubles Smarties' existing space, which is significantly taller than any of the existing buildings on the site, and is taller than that allowed for R-60 residential buildings nearby;
- additional parking spaces to replace a grassy area in front of the church building next to Erie Avenue;
- a dumpster to be placed adjacent to Erie Avenue directly across the street from residences.

At the neighborhood meeting hosted by Smarties May 4, we learned that Smarties is contemplating using the facilities as event space. However, Smarties said that they do not have details concerning this enterprise yet.

Additionally, we have heard rumors that Smarties is considering establishing a coffee house and even a food carry-out business on site.

These activities taken together are inconsistent with a residential, neighborhood

setting.

While the current application asks to increase the enrollment to 255 or 300 students, the Smarties' neighborhood meeting told us that they are planning additional activities that will further commercialize the site. Given its history, we are concerned that Smarties will seek approval for further enrollment increases and additional activities in the coming years.

Conclusion

Given the residential setting where Smarties chose to locate, we believe

-the expansion of Smarties day care enrollment,

-its stated interest in expanding its business into new enterprises, and

-the impacts that Smarties' own traffic study revealed

argue against a decision to approve Smarties application. We urge the Decatur Planning Commission to deny Smarties' application for an amended conditional use permit.

Respectfully,

Paul and Kathleen Wagner

122 Erie Avenue

Decatur Planning Commission:

Harold Buckley, Jr. (Chair), Gregory Chilik, Rachel Cogburn, Jason Friedlander, Joe Greco, John McFarland, and Mike Travis (Vice-Chair)

Attention: Angela Threadgill

SMARTIES ZONING ISSUES FOR MAY 9, 2023

My name is Richard Herzog. My wife and I live at 455 Clairemont Ave. next door to the Smarties property at 465 Clairemont Ave. I have lived in Decatur over 40 years. Our children attended Clairemont Elementary and City Schools of Decatur; I attended Ponce de Leon Elementary, formerly at the site of the Post Office.

I have three points to make.

1. These applications are a thinly disguised effort to obtain commercial zoning in a residential neighborhood.
2. The traffic study used unrealistic and incomplete assumptions.
3. Allowing the development of this large commercial enterprise in a residential neighborhood will transfer substantial value from the residents to the commercial enterprise.

COMMERCIAL ZONING.

Make no mistake, Smarties is a commercial enterprise. It is not a school.

Smarties' web site indicates that it is regulated and licensed as a childcare facility for children 6 weeks to 5 years. It has a tuition schedule for children from 0-60 months. Entering ages include kids under 2 in diapers The owner has acknowledged that without a special use permit Smarties could not operate in this neighborhood. It is not a school. It is a commercial enterprise and should be zoned accordingly.

The Board should consider the purposes of Institutional zoning before allowing a large commercial daycare to operate in a residential neighborhood. And this request is for a VERY LARGE commercial daycare facility. According to the applicant's own traffic study the standard traffic study ITE Trip Generation Manual, 11th Edition gives trip generation rates for a maximum of 220 students for the ITE Land Use: 565 – Day Care Center. There is not even a traffic manual to study for a daycare as large as the one proposed (whether 255 or 300).

There are very few rules for institutional zoning compared with, say, Commercial or Residential Zoning. The restrictions are basically whatever site plan the applicant can get approved. From the application, it appears that Institutional zoning tree ordinance coverage requirements are 45% vs. 65% for residential. What about the permeable to impermeable and lot coverage ratios and set-backs required of single-family residential construction? Is the plan to handle surface run-off from the new parking lot really adequate? Is a dumpster pad by the sidewalk at Erie really appropriate? Just because a new site plan could be approved, does not mean that it should be approved.

The benefits of Institutional zoning should be limited to public entities and non-profits with Boards of Trustees overseeing the public purpose. That is what Institutional Zoning is all about. It is designed to allow specialized spot zoning to enable public or non-profit entities to conduct their specialized mission in a specialized manner, generally in residential neighborhoods. It is not designed to allow commercial enterprises to operate in residential areas. It is appropriate to allow a church to operate a daycare as an adjunct to an institutional use (vacation Bible school, after care, baby-sitting during services, etc.). Decatur Pres. and First Baptist have had successful programs for years.

However, when the financially-strapped Lutheran church started leasing its facility to a private daycare operator, that was a stretch. Acting as a landlord to a commercial enterprise is not really an adjunct to an institutional use. When Smarties, a private owner of Institutional zoned property originally sought a special use permit to continue operating a daycare, there was very little neighborhood opposition because, with an enrollment of around 100 children, Smarties was small and unobtrusive. Nonetheless, the Planning Commission wisely imposed an enrollment cap as a condition to recommending that a special use permit be granted because after consultation with Ms. Kabat, Smarties' lawyer stated that the cap would be sufficient and that this should reassure the neighbors. Now Smarties admits they had plans to expand and increase enrollment all along.

While for-profit businesses, including Smarties, perform valuable services to the community, the purpose is profit, not a public purpose. If a neighborhood church or school sells or fails in institutional zoning it is almost always replaced by another church or school. But what would happen to the property, approved site plan and permitted use if Smarties sells or fails?

With the current structure, site plan and permitted use, not much would change. The property could be a church or daycare, but it could also likely be economically redeveloped as 5-8 single family residences, a city park, or other public use.

If these applications are approved, the facts on the ground will be very different. There will already be an approved site plan with a 30,000 square foot structure, 69 parking spaces, a commercial kitchen and space to support a restaurant or event facility. Another so-called “school” might buy the property – a different day-care, a driver’s education school, etc. Having already granted a special use for a commercial enterprise, if additional capacity, construction and uses are granted in this second application, the City could have litigation risk if it refused to grant a third application to Smarties or a new owner for a continued, or related use. It is difficult to know what a court or, especially in Georgia, an appellate court might find to be an appropriate continued or related use. This could even be precedent for special exceptions or other weakening of the zoning ordinance on other properties. The Common Table is not the only weak or failing church in Decatur, which speculators might be able to pick up at a deep discount if they thought they could obtain a commercial use.

Bottom line is that the Board should not allow a large commercial operation in institutional zoning in the middle of this residential neighborhood.

TRAFFIC.

The Smarties traffic study shows the exit onto Clairemont and assumes half the cars using it turn left (South). To residents of the neighborhood that assumption seems flawed at best, particularly during morning rush hour. The engineers probably included the Clairemont exit to make the numbers look better for the original plan, and the school did not really intend to use it. But do not be deceived. If this amended plan is approved, there will be a lot of cars trying to get down that driveway and onto Clairemont. Under the amended plan the little driveway is the only exit: 1) from the new parking area with 26 new parking spaces, and 2) for anyone else who drives into that parking area. It’s the only way out.

The traffic study was done on one day, Tuesday after MLK day. The study assumes an increase from 148 to 250-300 kids in attendance. That is, the study assumes 148 children were in attendance on January 17, 2023. But that assumption is flawed. At the initial hearing, there were unchallenged statements from a competing daycare operator (local family-owned, daycare in business for over 60 years) that all

Decatur-area daycares have excess capacity because of employee shortages and market issues and that Smarties had reported to the State that it had 67% current enrollment (or, around 100 kids). The traffic study is based upon the assumption of near doubling the enrollment from 148 to 255/300 students while failing to analyze the more reasonable assumption of almost tripling enrollment from 100 to 255/300.

Ms. Kabat stated to the neighborhood that she intended to have a coffee & muffins bar in the mornings, a take-out dinner service in the afternoons and a weekend and evening event space, initially only for parents of enrolled children and others who are not “strangers” to use her words. The traffic study fails to address these plans.

There is a myriad of other traffic implications from allowing a commercial enterprise of this size in a residential neighborhood. What about the large food delivery trucks for an expanded kitchen operation this size? How often and at what times will the truck emptying the dumpster, block Erie while sounding its back-up alarm? How many fulltime employees (as opposed to part-time to avoid benefits and overtime) are there and will there be at higher enrollment? Will the school system need more crossing guards to protect walkers? Smarties’ drop-off and pick-up process at random times all day (highest at 7:30-9 and 4-5:30) overlaps Clairemont Elementary.

The faulty traffic study and the real impact on our traffic is a second reason, and reason enough, for the Board to deny these applications to operate a large commercial enterprise in institutional zoning in a residential neighborhood.

PROPERTY VALUES.

The Institutionally zoned Church property (2.55 acres with 13,592 square feet of structure and 48 parking spaces) was sold to MerVic Group LLC, a private company, May 13, 2022 for \$2,550,000 with a \$1,050,000 mortgage. I don’t have access to square footage commercial comps, but residential structures in the Clairemont/Great Lakes neighborhood sold last year for approximately \$263/sq.ft. For a very rough, but nonetheless instructive, comparison, 13,592 sq.ft. x \$263 = \$3,574,696. MerVic/Smarties bought this property at a discount of over \$1,000,00 from the value of surrounding residential structures. Along with that structure, MerVic/Smarties also bought 2.55 acres of land, which is a large parcel in Decatur. The deep discount was available because of the zoning restrictions.

Commercial property is generally valued as a multiple of its income producing potential, which is how Smarties as a commercial enterprise would value it.

Smarties is seeking to develop this property to double its revenue producing potential, thus increasing dramatically its value. Doubling potential revenue will more than double the income producing potential because not all costs will double, thus more than doubling the commercial property value. MerVic/Smarties speculated at the time of its purchase that it would be able to develop the property as it is proposing, to increase its value and the return to its investors. Ms. Kabat stated at a neighborhood meeting on May 4, 2023 that she had intended this development at the time she bought the property (contrary to what she allowed her lawyer to state before the Planning Commission when a special use permit was granted). She also plans for a coffee & muffins bar, take-out dining and an event space, presumably generating additional incremental revenues. Granting Smarties this expanded commercial use would tremendously increase the value of Smarties' property. This would be a great deal for Smarties. But it would come at the expense of property values and livability in surrounding residential neighborhoods. The Board should not allow a transfer of value from homeowners to a commercial enterprise by granting an extraordinary exemption from the current zoning.

CONCLUSION.

The Board should deny these applications for at least three reasons.

One, the applications are no more than a thinly veiled effort to obtain commercial zoning for a large commercial enterprise in the middle of a residential neighborhood by abusing the concept of Institutional zoning. Granting these applications could have long-term negative effects on our zoning code.

Two, the applications are supported by a fatally flawed traffic study which does not fully reflect the real negative effects of the increased traffic on the neighborhoods and our city.

Finally, the Board should not sanction this transfer of value from homeowners to a commercial venture and its affiliated real estate speculators/investors by allowing a large commercial business to operate in our neighborhood.

Thank you,
Rick Herzog
455 Clairemont Avenue

From: [Tom Dempsey](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Smarties Expansion
Date: Thursday, May 4, 2023 3:28:44 PM

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Ms. Threadgill,

I live at 220 Wilton Drive and wanted to include my thoughts on the potential expansion of the Smarties Academy. Beyond what most of our residents are saying about changing our neighborhoods and the extra traffic (all true), I would like to add another variable to the discussion.

This concerns our community's efforts to keep students in our public schools. If Smarties expands, it will add more people into the private education system as opposed to the public. Decatur should not make private schooling more appealing. Residents will bypass the local system from an early age.

And with such a large increase in students, I don't believe that it will stop there. This isn't the size of a mom and pop daycare. This will be huge. There would likely be an expansion of grades offered that will add incentives for residents to send their children to private schooling.

Smithsonian researched the difference between the US and the incredibly successful education system in Finland. The obvious reason...Finland does not have private schools. All parents invest into the public system. For this and many other reasons, I do not support this expansion.

Regards,
Tom Demspey

From: [john phillips](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Cc: [Kelly Walsh](#); [Tony Powers](#); patty.garrett@decaturga.com; [Lesa Mayer](#)
Subject: proposed expansion of Smarties
Date: Thursday, May 4, 2023 12:40:06 PM

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Hello Angela,

I am unable to attend either of the meetings (in person or virtually) to participate in the discussion of the proposed expansion of Smarties. I have looked at some details of the proposal and assume there will be more revealed in the meetings, so rather than state every concern (in fairness, as I assume some may be addressed in the meeting), I would like to focus on one thing: *it will change the dynamic of the street in a negative manner*. The dynamic I refer to is the neighborhood feel of the street and it includes the visual aspect (what residents will see/will no longer be able to see) and traffic.

The traffic aspect would extend beyond Erie. We have already seen an increase in cut-through traffic, and such an increase in numbers trying to access an already congested area is an obvious issue.

For those of us who have made Decatur our home, the feel of the neighborhood is one of the most important reasons.

Sincerely,

John Phillips

From: [Charlene](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Smarties Academy Expansion proposal
Date: Tuesday, May 2, 2023 7:34:54 PM

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Dear Ms. Threadgill,

As a neighbor across Clairemont Avenue from the Smarties Academy, I would like to strongly express my objections to their proposed expansion. The proposed building expansion, the latest drawings passed around the neighborhood, would be completely out of character for this designated historic neighborhood. It is hideous. The increase of students would snarl our local traffic even more than the already reduction of road surface has, and it isn't even a school that benefits our neighborhood children. It was my understanding that when the property was purchased from the church that they would not change the footprint of the school grounds. They need to be held to that intent! If they want to expand, they should move to a location that would not be adversely impacted.

If this proposal for expansion is allowed to go through, it will set a dangerous precedent for the future of all of Decatur and will lay waste to any rules and regulations that are in place to maintain the character of our neighborhoods. Private entities, such as Smarties Academy, should be restricted to commercial locations, not be forced on our residential neighborhoods with no restrictions as to appearance, size, and local community impact.

Sincerely,

Charlene D. Hutcheson
516 Clairemont Ave
Decatur GA 30030
cdhut@aol.com

To: Members of the Planning Commission and the City Commission

From: Concerned Residents of Great Lakes and the historic Clairemont corridor

Date: April 4, 2023

Re: Smarties Academy Expansion

We are residents, taxpayers and voters who live in Decatur neighborhoods that will be impacted adversely, severely and permanently by the proposed Smarties Academy expansion. We urge you to reject Smarties' latest applications for the following reasons:

1. Barely a year ago, you effectively denied the current expansion applications, and nothing has changed since then to warrant approval. In March 2022, Smarties applied for zoning changes and a conditional use permit in order to operate as a daycare and to consistently zone the entire property as Institutional. At that time, as a condition of use, the Planning Commission recommended, and the City Commission approved, a cap on enrollment (148 students), and the site plan/zoning map that was approved depicts the property as it exists today. Both the Planning Commission and the City Commission were cognizant at that time of the detrimental effects that further expansion beyond the existing enrollment and existing footprint would have on the surrounding neighborhoods, as evidenced by the minutes of the meetings (excerpted and emphasis added):

March 8, 2022 Planning Commission Minutes: Smarties' lawyer, Ms. Sellers, stated that "the requests are to continue to use this property and transition the daycare use from an accessory use to the primary use in the event that the church ceases operations. Ms. Sellers stated that there would be no change to the use or the drop-off/pick-up...She added that they currently have 128 students and that is at their capacity for the current facilities." Ms. Sellers, in her rebuttal to opposing comments from neighbors, stated that "the request being made is providing more certainty to the surrounding neighbors than the current zoning does. She added that the request is to limit the use of the property to the existing daycare use, on the existing development of the property. In response to Chair Buckley, Jr., Ms. Sellers stated that their license is for 148 students and that it would be acceptable if the condition was to limit the total enrollment to 148 students. Mr. Ohlandt made an observation that placing a cap on enrollment would eliminate many of the concerns and provide an additional layer of certainty."

March 21, 2022 City Commission Minutes: Smarties' lawyer, Mr. Haymore, stated that "Smarties Academy sought to change the land use of a remnant piece of the property behind the building to the institutional land use classification to achieve consistency. He also stated that the academy proposed no changes in its operations, building foot print or site and that the requests were consistent with the historical use of the property. He added that the applicant sought to transition the day care use from an accessory use to primary use in anticipation of the discontinuation of the church use. He stated that the condition to cap enrollment at 148 students was consistent with state licensure requirements and that the applicant was amenable to the condition. He also stated that two neighbors raised concerns about the future use of the property to the Planning Commission. He added that Smarties Academy would be required to return to the rezoning process if it decided to expand the site and that there were no plans to make any additional changes with the property under the comprehensive land use plan."

November 15, 2022 Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Minutes: About 8 months after the applications were approved, Smarties was back in front of the Historic Preservation Commission with a request for expansion, despite Smarties' lawyers' prior assertions in March that no change in use or footprint was contemplated. Here are the minutes from the Nov. 15 HPC meeting which outline the HPC members' significant concerns regarding the expansion: "Representatives from Smarties Academy, applicants, and Plexus Research +

Design, architects, presented plans and drawings for a proposed facility expansion. The Commission provided review and comment, but did not vote. The Commission expressed considerable concern regarding the size and massing of the proposed building in relation to the existing historic church, stating the context is wrong. The Commission offered suggestions on how to scale the additions so the church remains the primary focus. The Commission also expressed concern regarding the amount of parking proposed for the site, which would remove a large amount of trees.

February 23, 2023 Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Minutes: At the February 2023 HPC meeting, Smarties presented some modifications to the exterior renderings, and many Decatur residents spoke in opposition to the proposed expansion. The HPC members also expressed concerns regarding the expansion, and their concerns are summarized in the minutes of their action, as follows: “Motion by Ms. Hahn, second by Ms. Dean, motion to recommend denial to the Planning and City Commissions of an amendment to a previously-approved Conditional Use Permit and an amendment to a previously-approved site development plan unanimously approved for the following reasons: 1) the modern style of the proposed two story addition, which will be visible from Clairemont Avenue, does not substantively reference the surrounding properties; 2) the massing and height overwhelm the existing building; 3) the materials at the rear elevation do not substantively reference the existing building; 4) the siting encroaches on the streetscape; and 5) the submitted renderings were confusing.”

The minutes outline various objections raised by nearby residents and concerns raised by the members of the Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the City Commission. All of the objections and concerns that were present barely a year ago still remain valid. Those objections and concerns resulted in the imposition of the enrollment cap barely a year ago. The cap should be maintained, and Smarties should be held to the commitments it made to the Planning Commission, the City Commission, and to the residents of the impacted neighborhoods.

2. The use of the property will be too intensive for a residential neighborhood. With the expansion, Smarties will double in size and be larger than Clairemont Elementary School, which is on the same street. In addition, we understand that Smarties intends to add a kindergarden and host camps for children in kindergarden through the 5th grade during the summer and at other times of the year. Further, we understand that Smarties intends to offer meals to-go to the families who attend the school, have an on-site coffee shop where Smarties parents can hang-out, and make the sanctuary available to Smarties parents for weekend events, such as birthday parties and other private gatherings. Given the size of the sanctuary, these gatherings could be quite large. None of these uses are stated in the Smarties applications, and they are not apparent on the floor plans filed with the applications because the floor plans are illegible.

A coffee shop, a take-out restaurant, and an event venue would not normally be “permitted uses” in or adjoining a residential neighborhood and for good reasons. These uses likely will result in more people being on the property for more extended periods of time, including weekends and after normal, week-day operating hours. The intensified noise and activity on the property, as well as the in-and-out traffic, potentially could be very disruptive to adjoining neighbors’ use and enjoyment of their homes. The extra use of the property beyond current hours and beyond the current number of students will disrupt what little peace and quiet we have left in our neighborhood.

3. Smarties' responses to the questions in the application forms are cursory. The questions in the applications are based on the standards and factors the Planning Commission and the City Commission are required by law to consider when reviewing applications for zoning map amendments and changes in conditional use permits. Here are our responses to some of those questions:

- a. How would the proposed use be suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby properties? Does the proposed amendment permit use that is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby property?

The proposed expansion is not suitable in view of the use and development of the adjoining properties, which are all zoned residential. The proposed building façade is grossly commercial and grossly large. The existing church is 13,592 s.f. The proposed new construction is 17,052 s.f. Effectively, Smarties is asking to build another church and then some within ½ of the existing parking lot. The size, scale and massing of the new building on the lot will overwhelm the adjacent residential properties and the historic, quaint church appended to the new building. The resulting building will change the character of the entire street from residential to commercial, and it is therefore not suitable in view of the use and development of the adjacent and nearby properties.

- b. Does the proposed amendment adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby properties? What adverse effects does the proposed use have on the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby properties?

- The proposed expansion entails tearing down mature woodlands that benefit the entire community and replacing them with a parking lot. This will erode Decatur's shrinking tree canopy and destroy the habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. It also could increase stormwater run-off significantly given the amount of currently permeable area that will become impermeable after the paving.
- The construction and staging to build such a big addition will be extremely disruptive for the surrounding properties for an extended period of time. The noise, dust, construction traffic, and all the other attendant nuisances from a prolonged period of massive construction will definitely have an adverse effect on the entire neighborhood and especially on the homes closest to the site. It is hard to imagine how Smarties will continue to operate during the construction. Will Smarties do the construction after hours and on weekends? If so, that will be even more disruptive.
- The adjacent residential properties will be adversely affected by the intensified use of the property that will result from the doubling enrollment and the additional uses noted above (i.e., the coffee shop, event space, and food take-out). The development likely will result in extended hours of use, more people traveling through the neighborhood, and more people on-site at the school every day, possibly as much as seven days a week throughout the year.
- If approved, the expansion will result in two schools of approximately the same size on the same street, within close proximity to each other. This will further congest traffic through the surrounding neighborhoods.
- The proposed development is highly commercial and opens the way for further commercialization of the Clairemont corridor and Erie Avenue and the degradation of the residential character of the adjacent neighborhoods and homes. It will make the immediately-adjacent homes much less desirable to future buyers who want to live in a residential neighborhood, not across the street from an overtly commercial building with an intensely commercial use.

We urge you to reject Smarties' applications. Nothing has changed in the year since you approved the extant site plan and capped enrollment, all with the understanding that Smarties would, in the words of

its attorney, "limit the use of the property to the existing daycare use, on the existing development of the property."

Sincerely,

Lynn and Greg Amoroso

209 Erie Avenue

Decatur, GA 30030 (all addresses below are within the 30030 zip code unless otherwise indicated)

Mark and Julia Brown

128 Erie Avenue

James and Kate Coblin

136 Erie Avenue

Kim and Devin Gordon

144 Erie Avenue

David Kay

143 Erie Avenue

David and Beth Kemper

517 Clairemont Avenue

Micah Porter and Jennifer Taylor

140 Erie Avenue

Tom Ramsey

135 Erie Avenue

Laura Simms

166 Erie Avenue

Ellen Slack

139 Erie Avenue

Stephanie Stach

153 Michigan Avenue

Paul and Kathleen Wagner

122 Erie Avenue

February 23, 2023

Re: Proposed Expansion of Smarties Academy Daycare

Dear Aileen, Angela, Members of the Historic Preservation Committee, and Members of the Planning Commission,

My wife Kate and I live on Erie Ave., and I am writing to express our opposition to the proposed plan to expand the Smarties Academy Daycare via construction and an increase in the number of children permitted to attend the daycare. The proposed construction and the proposed enrollment increase should both be rejected in order to preserve the character of our neighborhood and to preserve the current levels of traffic congestion, traffic noise, business noise (delivery trucks/recess), greenspace, tree canopy, and risks to students biking and walking to school (elementary, middle and high school).

The proposal to basically double the permitted enrollment at the daycare would be terrible for the traffic and congestion in our neighborhood and on Clairemont Ave. and would also result in an unacceptable increased safety risk to the many children and parents who bike/walk to and from Clairemont Elementary each day, and to the many students who bike/walk to and from the middle school and high school along Clairemont Ave. The proposal for increased enrollment should be rejected.

150 or so new students and an unknown number of new staff would add between 75 and 150 additional cars entering and exiting onto Erie and Clairemont every morning and every evening (I'm sure the estimates vary, but it will certainly not be an insignificant number of vehicles). This increase would add to the already congested traffic due to Clairemont Elementary, the

existing daycare traffic, cars cutting through our neighborhood on all sides to avoid Church Street, Clairemont, and Scott Blvd., and general morning and evening rush hour of people going to and coming from work. This increase also does not take into account the large apartment building across from McDonalds that has not even opened yet, which will certainly add to traffic congestion on Clairemont. This congestion and added traffic will also make it much less safe for the many students and parents who bike/walk to and from Clairemont Elementary each day and to the many students who bike/walk to and from the middle school and high school along Clairemont Ave. each day. Even if the construction is approved, the increase in enrollment should not be approved.

When the daycare asked for its initial zoning change it agreed to a cap on enrollment. We believe this cap assured many residents that the daycare would remain within its current buildings and its current level of noise, traffic and congestion. This cap certainly helped insure that there was not an outpouring of opposition to the zoning change. For the daycare to come back now and propose a more than doubling of its enrollment seems like an incremental bait and switch and should not be allowed. The increase in enrollment should not be approved.

Regarding the proposed construction, the new buildings look very corporate, and not at all in keeping with the generally pleasant, warm and blending-in style of the current property and of the Great Lakes neighborhood. Additionally, the proposed construction appears to remove a lot of trees and greenspace. The proposed construction should be denied, and the proposed style of architecture should be rejected.

If the construction is approved, the daycare should be required to utilize materials and an architectural style in keeping with the historic nature of the neighborhood. If the construction is

approved, the daycare should be required to increase the buffer to Erie Ave. as well as plant large mature trees to bolster the buffer to Erie Ave. Additionally, if the construction is approved, the daycare should be required to preserve the overall amount of greenspace on the property as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
James and Kate Coblin
jcoblin@yahoo.com

cc:

patti.garrett@decaturga.com

Tony.Powers@decturga.com

kelly.walsh@decaturga.com

lesa.mayer@decaturga.com

george.dusenbeury@decaturga.com

From: [Panos Kanes](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Smarties application to be heard by the Planning Commission April 11, 2023
Date: Saturday, April 1, 2023 6:38:55 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Decatur, GA network. Please note the sender and maintain caution when opening external links/attachments.

Dear Ms. Threadgill:

Please forward this e-mail to all the members of the Planning Commission.

Purely and simply, the Smarties Academy has gotten too big for their brtiches. They knew what they were getting into when they took over the space and had no assurances of any ability to expand. Other schools have simply moved to newer larger space. Take, for example, the Cliff Valley School which moved from Cliff Valley Way and is now located on Clairmont Road.

The Decatur Historic Preservation Commission has taken a hard look at this project and they don't like it. My family lives across from Erie Avenue on Clairemont Road and between Clairemont Elementary School and the Smarties Academy the traffic is snarled every morning and would only be getting worse. The Academy is a wonderful institution. It just needs to go somewhere else.

From: [George Lawes](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Smarties Academy expansion
Date: Thursday, March 30, 2023 3:10:40 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Decatur, GA network. Please note the sender and maintain caution when opening external links/attachments.

Ms. Threadgill,

As a long time resident of Decatur at 510 Clairemont Ave I am writing to object strongly to the proposed expansion of the Smarties Academy at the former Lutheran church at 465 Clairemont Ave. Expanding this commercial institution in a residential neighborhood would be an insult to the local residents, adding a minimum of 150 twice daily car trips through our already congested neighborhood. These are young children and every one of them is personally driven to and from school. At the increased density that is 600 car trips a day! I remind you and the Planning Commission that there is already an elementary school on that same street and the increased traffic would be dangerous to our school children and clog already busy streets.

The applicant claimed at its hearing for a variance when it purchased the property that they would not increase its density and the planning commission to my recollection stated it would recommend no further density upon approving the variance request. The applicant knew the property had limitations when they purchased the property and to come back now and request doubling its density and the related traffic is disingenuous to say the least. It goes without saying that once more structures are built, the applicant will move forward in the future to continue to increase enrollment to the extent they can succeed.

The city of Decatur claims to place neighborhoods first in its assessment of proposals such as this and we expect them to protect our neighborhood now and deny this request. There is NOT ONE sitting planning commission or city commission member who would support something like this sitting across the street from their house, in their neighborhood.

Deny this request.

Respectfully,
George and Katherine Lawes

--

George Lawes
510 Clairemont Ave Decatur, GA 30030

From: [Sharan Martin](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Proposed Expansion of Smarties Academy
Date: Monday, April 3, 2023 9:35:18 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Decatur, GA network. Please note the sender and maintain caution when opening external links/attachments.

Hi, Angela,

I have happily noted your assumption of ever-larger roles with the City of Decatur, and as I have told others, we are lucky to have you! I saw how hard and how fairly you work during my time on the city's Historic Preservation Commission, and I hope you are well.

I write to formally oppose the proposed expansion of Smarties Academy. I understand you'll forward my message to the members of the Planning Commission, and I stand by to discuss this further with you and with anyone of them.

We've been at 521 Clairemont Avenue, mid-block between Erie and Michigan avenues, for almost fifteen years, and we lived at 455 Clairemont for six years prior to that, so the church and its tenants have been our near neighbors for more than twenty years. The church is gone, of course, and the property sold to the most recent tenant which seeks to more than double the size of its pre-school enrollment and to more than double the size of the existing building.

I oppose these expansions which will:

1. fundamentally and irretrievably` alter the character and appearance of a building in an historic district;
2. present an almost industrial face to Eire Avenue neighbors;
3. destroy the woodland slopes which extend from this site's usable area;
4. increase stormwater runoff due to expanded impervious surfaces;

5. swell traffic within our quiet Great Lakes neighborhood;
6. daily endanger children and parents arriving and departing Clairemont Elementary School; and
7. create traffic hazard since left turns from Eire Avenue are already perilous.

I'll write as well to the Commissioners, of course, and have every hope that the building remains as it is, that the owner's current business there thrives and enjoys continued neighborhood support.

Thank you, Sharan Martin

Co-owner, 521 Clairemont Avenue

sharanmartin@bellsouth.net

From: [Tony Martin](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Cc: [Patti Garrett](#); [Tony Powers](#); [Kelly Walsh](#); [Lesa Mayer](#); george.dusenberry@decaturga.com; [Sharan Martin](#)
Subject: Smarties Academy Plan to double size of school
Date: Wednesday, April 5, 2023 11:41:44 AM
Importance: High

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Decatur, GA network. Please note the sender and maintain caution when opening external links/attachments.

Dear Angela,

I am writing as a neighbor to Smarties Academy. My wife, Sharan, and I lived next door to Holy Redeemer Church for six years (455 Clairemont Avenue), and then moved to 521 Clairemont Avenue in 2011 so we have watched the church change and then be sold the MerVic Group/Bogumila Kabat, d/ba “Smarties Academy”. While the change of use and zoning to an institutional one has accommodated the needs of Smarties Academy, the proposed expansion from 148 students to 300 students represents a DOUBLING of size, and the space to accommodate that many has increased by MORE THAN DOUBLE—from 13,592 SF to 30,644 SF. I am reasonably certain that such an increase in number of student and facilities was never envisaged when the initial zoning was granted—in fact the existing zoning states that it is “capped at 148 students”.

I have reviewed Ms. Kabat’s “Conditional Use Permit Application”, and I have focused on the following representations she has made:

- a. “adverse effects...on the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property”: she states “no adverse impacts”. This is clearly wrong as the size and scale of the proposed structures will present a massive commercial face to residences and residential properties on three (3) sides. Moreover, the design is “contemporary” and reflects some of the worst features of contemporary institutional design—basic boxes and totally ignores the fact that the property sits in a Conservation Overlay.
- b. “will or could the proposed use cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities or other public facilities?” Also, requested is an “evaluation of the traffic impact of the proposed use relative to street capacity and safety of public streets and nearby pedestrian uses.” She states that it “is a low impact use of the property and will not cause a burden to any public facilities” And that her “traffic engineer to perform a traffic study to confirm no adverse impact”. The current use already has had a substantial impact on the streets and traffic on Erie Avenue and Michigan Avenue (to access the stop light on Clairemont Avenue) as Smarties parents

have to drive through our neighborhood to make a left turn on to Clairemont Avenue. By her own estimates, she is proposing to have a **DOUBLING** of the traffic into and out of the property, which will lead to the attendant congestion and probable auto accidents. This is a major impact and a substantial increase in the number of cars and SUVs in and out of the school and will have a major adverse impact on the neighborhood and is sufficient reason to deny the application.

I oppose the granting of her request for a modification of the zoning to allow expansion of the facility to accommodate additional students. I would hope that our Commissioners would concur.

Sincerely,

Clarence A. Martin
Co-owner with Sharan Martin
521 Clairemont Avenue
Decatur, GA 30030

C. Anthony Martin, PhD, CCIM
Managing Principal
TMG Realty Advisors, LLC
521 Clairemont Avenue
Decatur, GA
30030

Ph: (DL) 404-301-4815 (c) 770-329-7538
Email: tmartin@tmgrealtyadvisors.com

320 Superior Ave
Decatur, GA 30030
April 4, 2023

Patti.Garrett@decaturga.com
Tony.Powers@decaturga.com
Kelly.walsh@decaturga.com
Lesa.mayer@decaturga.com
George.dusenbury@decaturga.com
Angela.threadgill@decaturga.com

Dear Decatur Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission,

As a 23-year resident of the Great Lakes neighborhood in the City of Decatur, I am writing to express my opposition to the current plan for the addition to the Smarties Academy on Erie Avenue. I am an active resident who walks or runs daily in the historic neighborhood in which the Academy resides. I am concerned about the negative impact this plan will have on the community.

First and foremost, the addition of the Academy will take away the historic appearance at the entrance to the community on Erie Avenue, which is a valued part of the neighborhood's character and history. Additionally, the plan will detract from the historic appearance and value of the church, which is an important landmark in the area.

Furthermore, the addition of the Academy will increase traffic up and down Erie Avenue during school time, as Claremont Elementary School is located just down the street. The traffic will also increase throughout the neighborhood as people cut through the neighborhood streets to avoid big intersections surrounding the Great Lakes. This will disrupt the peaceful nature of the neighborhood and create safety concerns for residents.

In addition, the proposed plan calls for the removal of a green space, which is currently home to predatory birds that play an important role in maintaining the balance of the local ecosystem. Removing this green space will disrupt the delicate balance of the environment and negatively impact the quality of life for residents. Part of my morning walk is hearing the birds call as I walk down Erie and Michigan Ave and observing the bunny rabbits as they reside in that area. If we continue to take the green space away from the Owls, Hawks and Falcons, not only will we limit the time we can observe them but will also have an increase in rodents in the area and that becomes a health risk for residents.

I strongly believe that there must be a better way to increase enrollment at Smarties Academy without sacrificing the character, safety, and natural beauty of the surrounding neighborhood. If the Academy wishes to expand, I urge you to consider alternative plans that will preserve the historic value and green space of the area.

Finally, I would like to suggest that any additions to the Academy should be designed to blend seamlessly with the historic church. By incorporating architectural features that complement the existing building, the Academy could become a positive addition to the neighborhood, rather than a detractor.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I hope that you will take my concerns into consideration when making your decision.

Sincerely,

Deborah Painter
404dlp@gmail.com

cc: devin.gordon@gmail.com
jgsbrown02@gmail.com

From: [VIRGINIA PEREZ](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Smarties Academy Proposed Building Expansion
Date: Tuesday, April 4, 2023 3:52:45 PM

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April 3, 2023

Attn: Decatur Planning Commission

I am out of town and unable to attend the Planning Commission Meeting.

As a 20 year resident of the Historic Decatur area, I am strongly opposed to the current Smarties Academy expansion proposal. The owner's application claims that this development will have no adverse affect on our neighboring property. This fails to recognize the following:

1. The review by the Historic Preservation Committee identified 5 areas that are not compliant with the City of Decatur Historic Preservation guiding principles. The proposed addition's tall, large, modern design is not in accordance with the Historic District requirements.
2. The application fails to acknowledge the impact on safety for Decatur neighborhood children walking and biking to and from local Decatur elementary, middle and high schools along Clairemont and Erie streets.
3. This development increases traffic flow and congestion throughout the surrounding neighborhood impacting not only Clairemont Ave and Erie Street but residents of the entire Great Lakes neighborhood.
4. Changing a private church parking lot to an expanded commercial lot of 75 or more spaces extending to the edge of the 449 Clairemont property line directly alters the residential environment for the 12 families residing in Buildings J, K, and L.
5. Smarties Academy has already been fined for improperly cutting down and removing mature trees behind buildings J & K. Now they propose to remove an 30 additional trees??!!

This expansion of the parking lot directly alters the residential environment for the 12 families residing in Buildings J, K, and L by invading their personal space and depriving them of their privacy. The operation of the school will entail parking lot impacts, such as air and noise pollution from cars and people coming and going within the parking lot area throughout the day and evening hours impacting the neighboring residents.

Thank you for your consideration.
Virginia Perez

City of Decatur Resident

From: [Laura Purcell](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: 465 Clairemont Avenue expansion concerns
Date: Wednesday, March 29, 2023 2:11:05 PM

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Hi Angela,

My name is Laura Purcell and I am a homeowner at 449 Clairemont Avenue. I am writing in regards to the conditional use and site development plan applications for 465 Clairemont Ave/Smarties Academy that will be reviewed during the April 11 Planning Commission meeting.

These applications claim that the expansion will have no adverse effect on our neighboring property, however, we have already been negatively affected by their removal of several mature trees and the clearing of land behind our property. The further planned destruction of the woods between our properties, along with the additional noise and traffic from more than doubling their current student capacity, is sure to negatively impact myself and my neighbors. I have also reviewed their proposed building renderings and believe that the modern design is inconsistent with our historic neighborhood. This expansion will be detrimental to our community as a whole.

Thank you so much for taking the time to hear my concerns, and I hope we can come to a conclusion that preserves the natural beauty and character that makes this community so special!

Thanks,
Laura Purcell
449 Clairemont Ave

From: [MITZI ROTHMAN](#)
To: [Patti Garrett](#); [Tony Powers](#); [Kelly Walsh](#); [Lesa Mayer](#); [George Dusenbury](#); [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Smarties Academy Expansion
Date: Monday, April 10, 2023 4:09:55 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Decatur, GA network. Please note the sender and maintain caution when opening external links/attachments.

From:
Mitzi Rothman
312 Superior Ave
Decatur, GA 30030
April 4, 2023

To:
Decatur Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission
Patti.Garrett@decaturga.com
Tony.Powers@decaturga.com
Kelly.walsh@decaturga.com
Lesa.mayer@decaturga.com
George.dusenbury@decaturga.com
Angela.threadgill@decaturga.com

Re:
Smarties Academy Expansion

As a longtime resident of the City of Decatur's Great Lakes neighborhood, I am opposed to the plan for the expansion of the Smarties Academy on Erie Avenue. I am concerned about the negative impact this plan will have on the community, the Tree Canopy & its eco system, increased traffic through neighborhood streets, to mention just a few concerns.

With Claremont Elementary School just down the street, the projected increase of 300 students will increase traffic throughout the neighborhood, already bothersome, with more people cutting through neighborhood streets disrupting the peaceful nature of the neighborhood and create safety concerns for residents.

The expansion will pave of a beloved green space for a parking lot which is currently home to predatory birds that play an important role in maintaining the balance of the local ecosystem disrupting the delicate balance of the environment, negatively impacting the quality of life for residents.

Taking green space away from the Owls, Hawks and Falcons, not only will limit the time we can observe them but will lead to the increase in rodents in the area and becoming a health risk.

This plan for Smarties Academy will negatively impact the character, safety, and natural beauty of the surrounding neighborhood.

Please remember why we all moved to Decatur in the first place.

Sincerely,

Mitzi Rothman

Mitzi Rothman
404/872-0582
mitzirothman@me.com
Pet Portraits
www.mitzirothman.com
Sent from my iPad

From: [Margo Smith](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Subject: Proposed expansion of Smarties
Date: Friday, April 7, 2023 4:36:01 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Decatur, GA network. Please note the sender and maintain caution when opening external links/attachments.

I just purchased a condo at 449 Clairemont Ave. and one of the primary reasons I decided on this condo was that the back deck overlooked undeveloped green space. Now I see that the Smarties academy proposes to replace that greenspace with a parking lot. I strongly object to this proposal and would ask the Planning Commission to seriously question the impact that this development would have on the neighbors of the academy.

--

Margo Smith
449 Clairemont Ave, L-3
Decatur, GA 30030

From: [Patti Garrett](#)
To: [Angela Threadgill](#)
Cc: [Andrea Arnold](#)
Subject: Fwd: Smarties Academy Expansion
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 8:05:45 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Decatur, GA network. Please note the sender and maintain caution when opening external links/attachments.

Sharing as input for Planning Commission meeting. I told Ms. Stach I would make sure you received her comments.

Thanks,
Patti
Patti Garrett
Mayor
City of Decatur
patti.garrett@decaturga.com



----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Stephanie Stach** <sstach@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Mar 21, 2023 at 10:20 AM
Subject: Smarties Academy Expansion
To: <patti.garrett@decaturga.com>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Decatur, GA network. Please note the sender and maintain caution when opening external links/attachments.

Hi Patti,

I am writing because I am very concerned about the Smarties Academy expansion. I think it is great that we have a well-respected childcare facility in our neighborhood. I think that it is a good use for the church building that might otherwise sit empty. I think the current building and landscape really adds to the character of our neighborhood and our city.

I have seen the renderings of the proposed expansion, though, and feel that it is entirely unsuitable for our neighborhood and community. The expansion is not only enormous, it looks

very industrial, and is not at all in keeping with the character of our neighborhood. I am concerned about doubling the traffic along Eerie, especially as the busiest time for Smarties will coincide with the busiest times for Clairemont pickup and drop off. I am also concerned about our loss of woodlands, and the increased run-off from additional paving.

I think that this expansion would have a really negative impact on our community, and I hope that you will not allow it to go forward.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Stach
153 Michigan Ave.