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Reference: Case Number 05-42 – Sibley Memorial Hospital

DC Zoning Commission
2nd Floor
441 4th Street NW
Washington DC 2001

Dear Commissioners:

We are writing in full support of the zoning request for the Sibley Memorial Hospital to expand Sibley Hospital. This letter of support is entirely voluntary, and based on the newspaper and other reports on this matter.

We write from three perspectives – as long time patients at Sibley, as residents of the nearby Glover Park neighborhood, and (Paul Spreiregen) as a professional architect and planner long familiar with matters of architectural compatibility, urban design, urban traffic, and zoning.

As patients, we must say that Sibley has been a vital factor in our health maintenance. We have used Sibley as in-patients and outpatients. We use and have much benefited from their many senior service programs. We have used their emergency medical services.

As nearby residents we believe we speak for many in affirming that having Sibley nearby has been an invaluable community asset. To be denied the expanded services that would be provided with an enlarged facility – services that reflect the ever-growing state of medical technology -- would be a clear loss to the nearby neighborhood and the larger community.

From an architectural and planning standpoint, the present Sibley buildings do nothing to impair the character or well being of the neighborhood, nor of nearby houses. The original buildings, designed by my late colleague Louis Justement FAIA, are a handsome architectural component of the neighborhood, easily the most architecturally distinguished building group in the area. The hospital buildings and the existing houses, despite their different scales, are fully compatible in their relationship. From an urban design standpoint, and with respect to the immediate and larger neighborhoods, the area can easily absorb new structures of the same quality on the Sibley campus.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

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As for the claim that the enlargement of Sibley will "increase traffic", that argument is patently absurd. Such an argument, the standard catechism of those who oppose change or growth per se and for any and all reasons, is without reason. If one takes a micro-cosmic view, traffic does increase to and from a particular community facility. But if one takes a larger view, a perspective of the larger urban fabric, the scale at which cities operate, increasing the efficiency and density of land use decreases traffic rather than increasing it. Increasing density means people can travel shorter distances. It means public transit operates more efficiently. It opens the opportunity for an expanded local bus shuttle system, several of which now operate in the city. This will benefit Sibley staff and patients equally. It means that local residents will be able to benefit from expanded and up to date medical care without having to travel unnecessary distances. Physicians who have their offices in or adjacent to Sibley will travel less and attend to their patients more. The impact of increased auto traffic to and from Sibley is easily accommodated on neighboring roads.

The actions of those who have objected to Sibley's zoning adjustment application are hardly in the best interests of the larger community. We support the prompt approval of Sibley's request to the DC Zoning Board.

Sincerely


Rose-Hélène Spreiregen


Paul D Spreiregen FAIA

Copy
Mr. Jerry Price
Sibley Memorial Hospital Chief Operating Officer