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5047 MacArthur Blvd., NW
Washington, DC 20016
September 5, 2006

Carol Mitten, Chair
District of Columbia Office of Zoning
Case #05-42 (Sibley Hospital)
441 4th Street, NW, 2nd floor
Washington, DC 20001

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 05-42 Ltr.
EXHIBIT NO. 57

Dear Ms. Mitten;

I am writing to register my strongest objections to the new medical office building that Sibley in our neighborhood. Although I do not speak on behalf of the Palisades Citizens Association, as its Traffic Chair, I spent a great deal of time analyzing our neighborhood's traffic patterns and the impact that this building would have. As I testified at our PCA meeting June 6, I can only conclude that the negative effects of this building would far outweigh the benefits.

When I began my analysis of the impact on our neighborhood, I thought it would be useful to compare the traffic generated by a medical office building of the size Sibley proposes with other facilities that offer clear benefits to the neighborhood. What I found was striking:

- Palisades library - under 400 car trips/day
- Wachovia with 24 hr ATM - around 400 car trips/day
- Safeway on MacArthur - 1500 to 2000 car trips/day
- Sibley's medical office building - **4000-4600** car trips per day.

(Based on Trip Generation, 7th edition, published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers. This is the same publication that the engineers hired by Sibley used in their own traffic study.)

In other words, Sibley's medical office building would generate traffic between **2 and 10 times** the amount generated by our library, our bank, and our grocery store. According to traffic projections from ITE and DDOT, we would not otherwise see this much more traffic in our neighborhood for **14 years**.

So my next step was to ask, well, would the neighborhood recognize a benefit equal to 10 times the benefit of a library, or twice the benefit of a grocery store. And here, I had to say no. First, we are not suffering from a lack of health care in Wards 2/3. In fact, when the Palisades Citizens Association resolved earlier this year to support a health care facility east of the river, one of the arguments made was the contrast between the quality care in our area vs. the lack of quality care in Southeast. Second, when I looked at where Sibley's patients will be coming from, I found that Sibley expects less than 1/4 of their patients to live in DC. So, the building would not be serving mostly neighborhood residents, but instead through traffic. That fact alarmed me, because I know from my work with the traffic officers in 2D that out-of-state speeders outnumber in-state speeders in our neighborhood between 2:1 and 3:1 - no matter whether the officers use photo or hand-held radar. Thus far, the negatives of the building clearly outweighed the benefits.

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I then asked myself, it is possible that the city might get a significant amount of revenue to offset the impact on our neighborhood? And the answer was no. Because Sibley is non-profit, DC wouldn't get property taxes or business income taxes; because only 1/4 of their staff live in DC, we wouldn't get much in the way of personal income tax either.

I then looked at Sibley's claims for needing the hospital. At the Palisades Citizens Association meeting on June 6, Sibley stated their operating margins were getting "smaller and smaller," and that they needed this medical office building in order to remain viable. However, when I examined the DC Hospitals Association's Financial Indicators report, Fall 2005, p.1, I saw that in fact, Sibley's operating margins have INCREASED, from 2.28% in 2002, to 2.79% in 2003, to 5.60% in 2004. Sibley also claimed that they need this medical office building to compete with other hospitals that have one. However, again, when I looked at the Financial Indicators Report, Sibley Hospital's operating margins were healthier than either GW's or Georgetown's -- both of which have medical office buildings. So, to me, Sibley's claims of need are neither compelling nor accurate.

When you make your decision on zoning, please consider the overall impact that this building would have on our neighborhood. My family and many of our residents bought our homes in this neighborhood because it offered a safe and pleasant environment to walk to the post office, the library, or the rec center. We are not just a collection of through streets and cut-through streets; we are a community. But lately we are a community under assault. Since we moved here 7 years ago, the Palisades has been saddled with additional traffic from growth at the Lab School, St. Patrick's school, the Field School, and now expects truck traffic from the Dalecarlia Dewatering Facility at the same time that Sibley's office building would be completed. A medical office building of the size Sibley proposes would damage the Palisades irreparably while offering little in return.

I hope you will vote "NO" when the Sibley case comes before you. Our community is counting on you.

Sincerely,



Laura Phinizy

cc: Jennifer Steingasser
Alma Gates