HARVARD UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

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OFFICE OF ZONING
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

2 December 1999

Mr. Peter Pulsifer
Chairman, ANC 2E
3265 S Street NW
Washington, DC 20007

Re: Opposition to proposed underground library at Dumbarton Oaks

Dear Mr. Pulsifer,

It has come to my attention that there is a proposal to add an underground library in the north vista at Dumbarton Oaks. As a former Dumbarton Oaks Fellow, I feel that this would be a travesty. I urge you to recommend a dual review of this proposal by the Old Georgetown Board and the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Review Board.

Dumbarton Oaks is one of the treasures of the built American landscape and certainly one of landscape architect Beatrix Farrand's seminal works. I believe there are better alternatives for adding library space that do not include putting a building underground in this fragile landscape. Damage to tree roots, recontoured land and altered water table, plus damage during construction, would all be catastrophic.

The Washington, DC landscape architect Michael Vergason, certainly one of the better landscape architects of our generation, was working on this project and resigned because he considered the project unfeasible. I ask you to please consider all alternative actions in regard to this addition. At all cost, the Dumbarton Oaks landscape deserves to be guarded and preserved.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Van Valkenburgh

Michael Van Valkenburgh, FASLA, FAAR
Charles Eliot Professor of Landscape Architecture

/jg

BZA
Case No. 16555
Exhibit No. 33

15 QUINCY STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16555
EXHIBIT NO.33