The Wesley Heights Association for
The Preservation of Residential Streets
-- A Committee of the Wesley Heights Historical Society --

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OFFICE OF ZONING
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

March 8, 2000

Ms. Jerrily R. Kress
Director, Office of Zoning
441 4th St. NW
Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Case No. 16559; The Field School Application

Dear Ms. Kress:

This letter represents over a year's worth of work as a committee under the auspices of the Wesley Heights Historical Society.

Since January of 1999, in both correspondence and presentations to the ANC 3-D and dialogue with the Field School, a group of residents from all parts of Wesley Heights has reviewed the varied aspects of the proposed establishment of the Field School on the Cafritz Property. The primary focus has been land use and preservation of character of our neighborhood and included these elements:

- environmental concerns (focused on adjoining National Park Land (Glover Archbold Park),
- the shared community resource of lower 44th Street as a haven for strollers, joggers, dog-walkers, children learning to ride bicycles, & bird watchers,
- the preservation of green spaces in an area otherwise besieged by developers wherein the D.C. government has not enforced zoning laws or levied sanctions against developers with known violations, and
- safety.

In March 1999, at a meeting of the Wesley Heights Historical Society (also attended by representatives of the Spring Valley/Wesley Heights Citizens Association), a Sub-Committee of the Wesley Heights Historical Society was established to review the Field School plans and seek tangible assurances that community concerns would be addressed.

BZA
Case No. 16559
Exhibit No. 81

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16559
EXHIBIT NO.81

The overwhelming view of the 90-plus residents attending the meeting was that protecting the remaining green space in our community and preserving the residential character of Wesley Heights would be served by keeping lower 44th Street closed to traffic of any sort.

During the last 12 months, The Committee met at least a dozen times and retained legal counsel to review zoning, environmental, and traffic issues. Extensive conversations were held with the National Park Service and other environmental groups. Numerous meetings and conversations were held with Field School representatives to review issues and concerns.

Findings and Resolutions

We are persuaded that the Field School development of the Cafritz Property does not threaten to significantly alter the existing character of our neighborhood community. We think they will be good neighbors. Items of particular concern and interest:

- Protection of Glover Archbold Park -- The Field School has worked with the National Park Service to establish a site plan that will ensure proper run-off into Glover Archbold Park – thereby preserving wetland areas, protecting the last stand of old-growth forest in the District of Columbia and not posing additional erosion threats.

- Preservation of Green Spaces – The school has pledged a green buffer of landscaping on its property boundaries. Perhaps more importantly, the maximum impermeable surface of the school's plan – buildings and parking lots -- is about 18 percent of the land area. A residential development could pave and cover up to 60 percent of the land area.

- Protection of Lower 44th Street -- The Field School has provided long-term binding assurances that lower 44th Street will not be used for access to their property – thereby preserving the community-wide sanctuary of lower 44th Street and adjoining National Park Land.

- Neighborhood Recreational Space for Children -- The Field School has pledged weekend use of their playing fields exclusively for the informal use of the local community (no leased use of facilities to area sports leagues). This is welcome in view of the very heavy weekend use of the fields at Horace Mann and Stoddert.

- Ongoing Liaison to the Community -- The Field School has already established a standing liaison with the community and in the future has pledged to serve as convener of this group to optimize community relations.

We support The Field School's plan to relocate to the Cafritz Property.

We believe the Field School's current plans reflect a shared commitment to preserving the environmental integrity of Glover Archbold Park, and preserving green/open spaces and the quiet residential character of Wesley Heights. Further, we fear the potential environmental and aesthetic consequences of alternative use of the land – especially another high-density development project.

Sincerely,

Lisa Natanson

Stephen K. Gardner

Tom Gibson

Stefania Berla

David Schlitz

Simon Sidamon-Eristoff