CHRISTIA[redacted]ESTERMANN | 2912 38TH STREET, NW WAS[redacted]GTON, DC 20016

Government of the District of Columbia
Board of Zoning Adjustment

July 3, 2000

REFERENCE: Application Number 16586 (Charles E. Smith Companies and Underground Garage Construction)

To the Attention of the Board:

I wish to express my views on the application for a use variance from subsection 300.3 to use a portion of the underground garage for non-required accessory parking for the adjacent apartment building in an R-2 district at the premises 3700 Massachusetts Avenue, NW.

I am a neighbor to the project as well as a stockholder in the Charles E. Smith Companies. The project has merit but I request that you use caution in a use variance as the current design for the 279-space garage will have a permanent and unalterable impact on the community. The SMITH impact statement and traffic study are flawed as they inadequately assess the impact to traffic congestion on Garfield Street and surrounding routes. The traffic study uses national industry data which underestimates both the use of the garage during rush hours and also underestimates the current congestion because the study was conducted while Cathedral Avenue was under Department of Public Works construction and was one way only. Neighborhood field studies of traffic during current rush hours indicate that delay times are higher than the SMITH study reports.

The garage as currently designed will have only one collocated entrance and exit. This configuration is inadequate because it forces all garage traffic onto a small feeder street that is not designed for additional 279 cars using one entrance. Garfield Street currently has street parking on both sides and is barely passable when two cars try to pass each other in opposition. The traffic study estimates that fewer than 76 cars will use the garage during the peak rush hour. This figure is low, as it does not account for the specific demographics of the future tenants in a luxury high-priced apartment building. The traffic study should have used local information and not national data to reflect the traffic patterns of a more affluent tenant population that is more likely to drive to work than use mass transit or be retired.

The current design of a single entrance and exit is flawed. I suggest that you use your experience and judgement of the current local traffic problems to determine the inadequacy of the single entrance/exit design, and request that SMITH conduct a new and relevant traffic study. A garage redesigned to include two entrances/exits would provide more flexibility for the garage patrons and assist the city in preventing future congestion in a main nexus of commuter thoroughfares on Wisconsin and Massachusetts Avenues.

Thank you,

CHRISTIAN WESTERMANN

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OFFICE OF ZONING
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BZA
Case No. 16586
Exhibit No. 31

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16586
EXHIBIT NO.31