COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001
February 5, 20001

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, N.W. Room 210
Washington, DC. 20001

Re: Application No. 16618

Dear Members of the Board:

As the Ward 2 Councilmember, I want to take this opportunity to state my strong objections to the Phillips Collection expansion plans. The Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) is considering requests for special exceptions under sections 411.11 and 2516.1 and variances under sections 402.54 and 2001.3 for a proposed expansion of The Phillips Collection to an adjoining property at 1618 21st Street, N.W. The requests are consolidated into BZA application #16618. I understand that the hearing on this matter will continue in May, 22, 20001.

I have been a strong and consistent supporter of The Phillips Collection and consider the museum to be an asset of international significance to both Washington, D.C., and Ward Two. Further, the presence of The Phillips Collection has been an anchor to the Dupont Circle neighborhood and has enhanced the Massachusetts Avenue corridor. Nonetheless, I oppose the proposed expansion of The Phillips Collection into an apartment building at 1618 21st Street, N.W. I feel, the proposed expansion presents significant issues of concern to the neighborhood.

The residential neighborhood near The Phillips -- Massachusetts Avenue, Q Street, 21st Street, and Hillyer Place -- presents a unique mix of housing stock and facilities which serve a diversity of non-residential uses. The area forms the core non-commercial zone on the western end of the Dupont Circle neighborhood.

As the former Chair of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B ANC), and as a longtime resident of the Dupont Circle neighborhood and as the Councilmember of Ward 2, I have a long history with various economic and community development initiatives in Dupont Circle. I have worked long and hard over the years with many of neighbors, friends and colleagues supporting some and opposing other projects. With each case, our goal was to preserve the residential/commercial balance of this diverse and vibrant, yet fragile, neighborhood. This area faces the stress of unwanted commuter traffic, a serious deficiency of available parking, and the gradual encroachment of non-residential uses in former residences. Despite these challenges, the neighborhood has managed to maintain a strong residential quality amid the growing commercial activity and increasingly busy traffic. This past year, I co-chaired, along with ANC 2B, a parking task force which attempted to deal with myriad traffic and parking issues which were negatively impacting this neighborhood.

BZA
Case No. 16618
Exhibit No. 151

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16618
EXHIBIT NO.151

If approved without significant protections, the variances and special exceptions submitted for review to the BZA by the Phillips Collection could detrimentally and irrevocably alter the balance of this unique urban neighborhood. The applicant ANC 2B, DCCA, the Dupont Circle Citizens Association (DCCA) and the neighborhood protestants all agree this expansion will greatly increase day and evening traffic, provide additional stress to parking, remove moderate-priced apartments from the housing stock, displace residents, and further inconvenience the neighborhood.

While I acknowledge The Phillips Collection may expand by right into the apartment complex -- a zoning issue which I intend address in the future -- the BZA must fully consider the concerns of the neighborhood and the overall, permanent changes which will occur as a result of the proposed expansion.

I hope The Phillips Collection will continue to engage in significant discussions with ANC 2B and neighbors to negotiate on terms which could mitigate the impact on the neighborhood through an enforceable covenant. To their credit, the Office of Planning has engaged in this type of process in developing recommendations for their report. However, for such an agreement to be successful, the concerns of the neighborhood must carry great weight and be dealt with accordingly.

Again, I want to make clear I oppose the expansion as it was initially proposed to me by the President and Board Members of the Phillips Collection. Without the support of the neighborhood, ANC 2B and the DCCA, I cannot in good conscience sanction the proposal. I strongly urge you give the issues I am raising, which are reflective of the concerns of the residents, your most serious attention and consideration. I am willing to assist in any constructive way to assist in addressing these issues among the parties.

Thank you. If you have further questions, please call me on 724-8058.

Sincerely,

Jack Evans
Councilmember, Ward 2