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2001 MAR 20 PM 1:09

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20001

March 20, 2001

"Speeding traffic and pedestrian street life are antithetical and incompatible. . . . Streets, and how they function, are the ultimate distinction between a city and a suburb."

Cities Back From The Edge
by Roberta Gratz with Norman Mintz

My name is Mary Vogel. I live at 600 G St. NE—although as a tenant, I'm about to be displaced by some wealthier folks from the suburbs who are tired of the commute. I'm here to testify against the scaled back proposal by BP Amoco.

This company's resistance to becoming a partner in a well-planned city astounds me! As a community planner, I have dealt with lots of NIMBY neighbors in my life. I want to assure you that that is NOT what is happening here. The neighborhoods that would be impacted by BP Amoco's proposal have a refreshing number of activists who are saying we WANT development, we WANT change on H Street. But we want it to enhance the context that brought us to the neighborhoods in the first place: *Compact urban form that allows shops, services and mass transit to be within easy walking distance of our homes.*

Walkability is the key here. We WANT to walk to our NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING commercial areas. We want them to be safe and inviting to the pedestrian. We want to run into our neighbors on a Saturday shopping trip or a Sunday morning brunch. We want to feel like a neighborhood. We want to get to know our neighbors on both sides of H Street. We do NOT WANT to be divided by an auto-oriented speedway for suburban commuters!

Time after time, many of us have told BP Amoco that their proposal would continue to erode what we are seeking from our highly sustainable urban lifestyle. We have offered them the opportunity to partner with us in creating a mixed use development better suited to a site that is the gateway to our neighborhoods and that is only five pedestrian minutes away from the major transportation hub of our region.

We have not called for excluding a gas station. We have called for recognition of the urban form that already existed on that site. We have called for rowhouse density of up to four stories. Some of us have said maybe even five. Some of us have told BP Amoco

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we would be willing to help them get a zone change to achieve greater density on this site than the C 3 A currently allows. Imagine! A neighborhood asking for GREATER density, not less! This is NOT a NIMBY neighborhood. We are a neighborhood that makes a strong effort to educate ourselves about good planning and appropriate urban form. Some of us are regulars at the excellent National Building Museum programs on this subject. We'd like to see some of you there more often too.

We recognize that today's city needs what planners call TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT. We need more people living within easy walking distance of our $11 billion dollar investment in Metrorail. We need people to be able to walk out their front door and onto mass transit. The site in question would allow for both since H Street, NE is one of the few remaining streets in our city that is served by frequent bus service.

Up until now, zoning has allowed for maximum densities. Maybe it's time to take a look at whether this city should be calling for minimum densities as well in order to meet its infill needs. This proposal makes it perfectly clear that we can't always depend upon the market.

The Office of Planning has done a satisfactory job of telling you how this proposal does not meet the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, including the Ward 6 Plan. Please vote to DENY this proposal from BP Amoco. And please use this case to kickoff a more comprehensive look at zoning in our city.

