November 30, 2000

BZA Application Number 16648
Hearing Date: December 19, 2000

Chairperson Sheila Cross Reid
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, NW
Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

16648

Dear Ms. Cross Reid:

Attached is a letter from the Committee of 100 on the Federal City on a case pending consideration before the Board of Zoning Adjustment. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to make you aware of its opposition to the BP Amoco Corporation's proposal to construct a gas station along the entire commercial frontage of the 300-Block of H Street, NE. This site has long been proposed for an economic development catalyst and "gateway" to the corridor that construction of a block-long gas station would preempt. The BP Amoco proposal is wholly inconsistent with the planning goals for the area envisioned by the District of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan.

I respectfully request to present testimony at the applicable hearing, and ask that this letter be made part of the case file.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Lally

Patrick J. Lally, Trustee
Committee of 100 on the Federal City

Attachment

BZA
Case No. 16648
Exhibit No. 31

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16648
EXHIBIT NO.31

The COMMITTEE of 100 on the FEDERAL CITY
founded 1923

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November 14, 2000

The Honorable Anthony A. Williams
Mayor of the District of Columbia
One Judiciary Square
441 Fourth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Mr. Eric Price
Deputy Mayor for Economic Development
801 North Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Mr. Andrew Altman
Director, Office of Planning
801 North Capitol Street, NW
5th Floor
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mayor Williams, Mr. Price, and Mr. Altman:

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City, Washington's oldest and largest planning advocacy organization, is troubled by the BP Amoco Corporation's plan to build a gas station along the entire commercial frontage of the 300-Block of H Street, NE -- a site long envisioned for the "H Street Gateway" project. The Committee urges you to oppose BP Amoco's proposal, support vigorously all planning efforts to revitalize the corridor, and bring to bear the resources of the National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC) to make the Gateway and renewed investment in the corridor a reality.

Few of the District's traditional commercial corridors were damaged as heavily by the 1968 riots as H Street, NE, and even fewer have continued such a precipitous downward spiral of disinvestment. As a result, the corridor's remaining businesses, several new promising enterprises, and fragile adjacent residential neighborhoods are inordinately threatened by the construction of an enormous gas station that is wholly incompatible with needed neighborhood-serving pedestrian-friendly retail along the street.

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Rather than a gas station, this block must have the type of mixed-use economic development catalyst the Comprehensive Plan calls for in the Gateway. A fueling facility largely serving commuters to the central business district is eminently better suited elsewhere, and should not jeopardize a crucial part of H Street that sets the tone for future planning goals.

The Gateway project is even more important to this part of the city in light of certain current and future developments affecting H Street. Over the next ten years new jobs on the corridor, a thriving downtown, the CSX telecommunications right-of-way, a new convention center, the relocation of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and the Union Station Overlay's proposed 10 million square feet of high-density commercial development will place an exponentially greater emphasis on the corridor's commuter-serving role. Suburban-style strip stores, auto parts facilities, gas stations, and other out-of-context, inappropriate uses have begun to proliferate the corridor, and threaten to destabilize small businesses that serve people who live there. The time is now to foster the businesses that strengthen and promote the overall residential and retail core of Near Northeast before H Street becomes nothing more than another inner-city highway like New York Avenue, NE.

The corridor's principal eleven blocks warrant a comprehensive planning approach toward revitalization that only your active endorsement can provide. As "gateways" and various economic redevelopment projects begin to transform other parts of the city, H Street continues to languish, and now may forever lose its own Gateway to a gas station. Before BP Amoco can build, however, it must obtain the applicable BZA approvals and the City Council's agreement to close alleys in Square 776. Affected Councilmember Sharon Ambrose strongly disagrees with Amoco's plans, and the Committee urges your opposition as well.

Furthermore, the H Street corridor should receive the added resources of NCRC's coordinated public and private sector revitalization efforts. The Corporation's mission to spur new business activity, create jobs, and help revitalize economically distressed neighborhoods through investment and tax incentives would be invaluable to facilitate economic growth on H Street, NE. The Committee would welcome your support for including the H Street Gateway and the corridor on NCRC's priority list.

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Today as the Williams Administration prepares to announce its "Downtown Action Agenda" of sweeping plans for new downtown housing, entertainment, and retail, the Committee believes it is particularly auspicious to encourage you not to lose sight of the important role the H Street Corridor will play in making your vision for downtown a reality. As the Agenda asserts, the central business district's long-term well-being is directly related to the stability of its neighboring commercial areas and residential districts -- H Street is among the most important of these. Your opposition to BP Amoco's gas station in the 300-Block, active support for a workable revitalization plan for the corridor, and advocacy to NCRC for the H Street Gateway would ensure a promising future for Near Northeast Washington.

Sincerely,

Kateri A.L. Ellison

Kateri A.L. Ellison
Chairman
Committee of 100 on the Federal City

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