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

Re: BZA Application No. 16648
Hearing Date: December 19, 2000

Dear Ms. Reid,

Public meetings regarding a proposed gasoline station expansion oin the 300 Block of H Street, NE have been held recently by BP Amoco. This proposal is clearly targeted at commuters from outside the District and has virtually no support within the nearby community. BP Amoco is proposing a "suburban style" block-long gas station, mini-mart, and car wash on a critical block of an important commercial thoroughfare. The proposed project will greatly discourage opportunities for the type of commercial redevelopment that has long been hoped for in this commercial corridor – hopes that include small businesses and solid "anchor" businesses that will encourage neighborhood and pedestrian traffic from Union Stations and Capitol Hill. Many of us believe that one of the principal reasons that redevelopment of the north and south sides of the 300 block of H Street has not already occurred is due in large measure to the exceedingly poor operation of the current Amoco Station at the corner of Third and H, NE. BP Amoco has recognized in public meetings that the current operation has been a source of problems for the neighborhood. And now Amoco desires to expand the possibility of poor operations from 7,000 to over 50,000 square feet.

Several reasons for opposition to the BP Amoco proposal include the following:

1) A block-long gas station is an inappropriate use for an urban commercial property with excellent access to public transit, Union Station, and the office space rapidly being developed from Union Station to Eckington. It does not encourage community use or pedestrian traffic from these locations. Development of this block should include a building along H Street to help reinforce the urban corridor and encourage pedestrian activity.

2) The expansive, suburban plan diminishes the urban feel of the corridor, and will discourage other, more desirable uses on nearby commercial properties. (Again, please note #1 above.)

3) The requested alley closing and reconfiguration will diminish emergency access to the rear of several residences. In addition, the alley closing represents a public contribution to the project, and should not be supported.

5) The proposal includes demolition of H Street's last remaining wood frame structure - a structure that most probably dates from just prior to the Civil War. (There is a pending Landmark Application due for consideration in December.)

BZA
Case No. 16648
Exhibit No. 64

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EXHIBIT NO.64

6) There is inadequate separation from the gas station operation and nearby residences, and the proposal fails to provide the required separation from 829 Third St., NE.

7) There are numerous environmental concerns, including:

- traffic implications of vehicles entering and leaving
- increased vehicular activity (including air quality concerns)
- large impervious surface runs counter to ongoing efforts to protect the Anacostia River water quality and CSO overflow
- odors, fumes and health risks to an already overburdened population
- lighting will disturb neighbors at night
- late night hours (stereos and car noises at night)

H Street is finally on the verge of experiencing significant development activity - development which we hope to guide in the direction of neighborhood-serving commercial activities. Projects such as the proposed BP Amoco are inconsistent with shared visions of how the corridor should be developed, and inconsistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan for this area. Projects such as the current proposal will contribute to H Street becoming just another sad commercial commuter corridor reminiscent of New York Avenue, NE. This will ultimately contribute to a decline in the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Thank you for your consideration of my letter and input concerning the redevelopment of H Street. My husband and I will be pursuing the purchase of our former rental home at 511 G Street NE this next Spring, and H Street development is extremely important to the quality of life for our neighborhood and community.

Sincerely,

Cindy Gustafson

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cc: Mayor Anthony Williams
Councilwoman Sharon Ambrose
Mr. Andrew Altman, Director, Office of Planning