THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

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D.C. BOARD OF ZONING
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11 April 2001

Re: BZA case 16702

Dear Ms. Cross Reid:

The Commission of Fine Arts and its Old Georgetown Board have reviewed the proposed increase in height of an additional residential floor at the Georgetown Incinerator project at their respective public meetings 15 March, and 5 April. The Commission is strongly opposed to the project exceeding the zoning height limit at this sensitive location on the Georgetown historic waterfront and the variances sought by the developer to permit this increase.

We would like to point out that Public Law 808, the Old Georgetown Act under which we operate, specifically charges the Commission with the responsibility "to regulate the height, exterior design, and construction of private and semipublic buildings in the Georgetown area of the National Capital". The Commission is aware that the forty foot height limitation for the Incinerator project has been measured from South Street, the highest elevation on the site, which is normal practice in developing a scheme with maximum allowable density. However, there is a major drop in elevation of more than forty feet to the south perimeter of the project site, thereby permitting the developers a greatly increased building mass. Its elevation above the grade of K Street is ninety feet as approved. This condition already limits the vista north of the C & O Canal down Wisconsin Avenue and 31st Street to the Potomac River, an important aspect of the historic district. To add an additional floor to the Incinerator project would further diminish this crucial aspect of this site.

Thirty years ago the Commission spear-headed the drive to down-zone the industrial waterfront area which at that time had a height limit of ninety feet. Two new zones were created with height limits of sixty feet and forty feet. This latter category was applied to sites on the waterfront that were deemed especially critical to preserving the views of the Potomac River and national memorials beyond. The Incinerator project site is on one of the most important of these, thus raising the concern of the Commission and the community.

BZA
Case No. 16702
Exhibit No. 31

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16702
EXHIBIT NO.31

At each public meeting, this important issue was emphasized in testimony. The Old Georgetown Board stated that, from a design standpoint only, the revised scheme adding an additional floor was acceptable. However, in response to the background information on the special zoning designation, the concerns of the Citizen's Association of Georgetown and various community organizations, as well as the precedent of the Commission's efforts to lower the building heights in the waterfront area, the Board recommended against the added height given its context. The Commission strongly concurs with the Board.

I will be happy to address any question you may have regarding the Incinerator project.

Sincerely,



J. Carter Brown
Chairman

Ms. Sheila Cross Reid, Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment
Office of Zoning
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210
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VIA FAX: 202-727-6072