Dr. Jeffrey Heyer
903 East Capitol Street SE
Washington, DC 20003
18 June 2001

D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
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Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: **Application 16735**

Dear Director Kress,

I am writing to you regarding the application for a zoning variance from the lot occupancy requirements to allow the construction of a rear addition to the row dwelling at 901 East Capitol Street SE (Application Number 16735). I strongly object to this construction plan for the reasons itemized below and request that you recommend against granting the variance.

My knowledge of the proposed project is based on my conversation with the applicant, Ms. Beverly Anderson, and on the architectural sketches of the proposed design that the applicant briefly showed me. From these I have learned that the addition would be three floors in height and approximately 15 feet in width, and would effectively comprise a one-bedroom town home. According to Ms. Anderson, she would like to build the addition so that she need not commute from Virginia each day. The addition is necessary for providing living space since 901 East Capitol St SE is currently utilized as office space.

My objections to this construction plan are as follows:

1. My property at 903 East Capitol Street SE would be adversely affected by this addition. The construction of this addition will block the western exposure to the back of my house, reducing the light into my kitchen, dining room, upstairs bath, master bedroom, and back porch, as well as reducing the air circulation (which is not insignificant since my house does not have central air conditioning). The effect of the light loss will be to make an already dark house darker. The degree to which my house relies on the western exposure for light is misrepresented in the architectural sketches for the construction plan (they also misrepresent the western facing windows of 905 East Capitol Street). The attached photograph shows the actual western facing windows for my house and 905 East Capitol Street. In the rear of my house I have nine windows that face west or south. Only two of these nine windows will remain unaffected by the construction of the addition (note that the photograph does not show all nine of the windows in the rear of the house that face the south or the west and receive significant light from a south/west exposure). The design and construction of my house was based on the open western exposure of the back of the house as it is today.

2. The three-level addition is in violation of the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for Additions to Historic Buildings. The guidelines state: "A new rear addition that can be seen from a public street or alley should be compatible with the design of the rear elevation of the existing building." The existing building height is two levels. The design has other features that are incompatible with the guidelines. For instance, the guidelines state: "The roof shape of an addition should relate to the roof

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shape of the existing building. ...Introducing a new roof shape would probably not be compatible." It could also be argued that the design does not respect the established rhythm of the existing structure.

3. The new addition, if constructed, will permanently alter the historic façade on the unit block of 9th Street SE. Most backyard additions that are undertaken on Capitol Hill have limited impact on the historic character of our neighborhood because they do not directly face the streets; they generally face another property's backyard. This addition, which would face 9th Street SE, would be an egregious blight on this block if it is poorly constructed - a block that is currently considered to have a very elegant row of historic houses. It seems to me that permanently altering the historic façade of this street is a very high price to pay in order to provide part-time living space to someone who has elected to be a resident outside the District. When Ms. Anderson recently renovated her building she made the conscious decision to utilize the building entirely as office space. She could, after all, convert her upstairs office area to a residential space, eliminating the need for the addition.

4. The Advisory Neighborhood Council 6B has not been given an opportunity to review the construction plans and formulate a recommendation to the Board of Zoning Adjustment regarding the zoning variance. It is my understanding that the ANC would normally be given this opportunity. At a minimum, the decision to grant a variance should be postponed until the ANC-6B has had an opportunity to review the zoning variance application.

5. The parking congestion on 9th Street at East Capitol Street caused by Ms. Anderson's business will be exacerbated by the reduction in parking spaces resulting from the construction of the addition. Even at the present time, the clients of Ms. Anderson and her associates often illegally park, blocking views of intersections and blocking access to sidewalks.

For these reasons I urge you to recommend against the zoning variance application 16735. I think that there are a sufficient number of issues that negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood homes and the architectural character of this block to warrant such a decision.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Heyer

