September 19, 2001

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Ms. Sherry Pruitt
Zoning Board of Adjustment
Government of the District of Columbia

Re: Case # 16739 Chancery of Latvia

Dear Ms. Pruitt:

At the duly noted and regularly scheduled meeting of Sheridan-Kalorama ANC 1D held on September 18, 2001 Commissioner Carter and Commissioner Salonia were present, thus forming a quorum (2 of 2). The Commission discussed the above referenced application. The proposal is to permit the purchase of 2306 Massachusetts Avenue, the Alice Pike Barney House, by the Embassy of Latvia for use as a chancery. The above named applicants and their attorney, Christopher Collins, were present.

The issues that were discussed were the residential character of Sheridan-Kalorama, inadequate and unattractive parking, ineffective enforcement of local zoning regulations with regard to chanceries, and findings in the National Capital Planning Commission Report which is referenced in the application submitted by Latvia.

Sheridan Kalorama is a residential historic district. The Alice Pike Barney House was designed as an artist studio-salon and house for Alice Pike Barney. The Barney House was designated as a D.C. Landmark because of the prominence of Alice Pike Barney, the original intended use and the architectural features. Any changes in use would adversely affect the historic character of this building and the neighborhood. A Chancery is by definition, an office building and allowing another office building in an already overburdened neighborhood, would detract from the residential character of that neighborhood. The applicant will state that this building has not been a residence for some time. However, the last two owners of the property stated publicly that they had purchased the building primarily as a residence. To many of the residents of the neighborhood, this becomes a quality of life issue. As an office building, the chancery would have people arriving in the morning, leaving in the evening and they would make no contributions to the neighborhood. The application submitted by Latvia mentions the large number of chanceries in the neighborhood as reason to allow another

BZA
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chancery. ANC 1D believes just the opposite is true, that another chancery would seriously reduce the residential character of the neighborhood.

The Embassy of Latvia has submitted a list of proposed agreements regarding its occupancy of 2306 Massachusetts Avenue. Although the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations states that the diplomatic community is expected to obey the laws and regulations of local jurisdictions, enforcement has been a problem. The Alice Pike Barney House is designated as an historic landmark and it would be a shame if a foreign government were allowed to purchase part of our heritage with the previous history of compliance enforcement by the State Department. We understand that the State Department must weigh local concerns with broad international issues, especially at this time. However, we are asking that the BZA follow guidelines set up in the National Capital Planning Commission Report as referenced in the application submitted to the Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment by Latvia.

ANC 1D would like to note that the application mentions support by the Historic Preservation Review Board. The HPRB staff only approved the concept design for the two proposed signs. The report also mentioned that the ability of the HPRB to regulate interior alterations is limited and that they hope the Latvian government will respect the unique architectural character of this property. The first and second floor spaces, including the foyer, salon, dining room, library, stair and studios were designated as a landmark by the HPRB in 1995, one of only 11 designated interiors in Washington. The entire site, consisting of approximately 8864 square feet in land area, has been designated an historic landmark and is listed in the D. C. Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places.

One of the goals and objective stated in the Capital Planning Commission Report is that in designating new locations for Chanceries and Embassies of Foreign Missions, special care should be given to protecting residential areas. The property that Latvia wishes to purchase is in a D/R-3 zone. Chanceries are encouraged to locate in industrial, waterfront, mixed-use, medium-high density or high density residential. 2306 Massachusetts Ave. is not in any of those zones. The report says that although Massachusetts Avenue should be retained as a unique area for diplomatic facilities, smaller buildings should be retained in residential use where practicable.

The National Capital Planning Commission report specifically identifies Sheridan-Kalorama as a residential neighborhood and that new Embassy locations should be encouraged in the area to preserve the residential character of the neighborhood. ANC 1D would support the purchase of a residence as an Embassy, the official residence of the ambassador. This report suggests that the acquisition of privately owned land for Foreign Mission Chancery use be minimized.

Another concern that was voiced at the ANC meeting by the neighborhood is the use of parcel 5 as a parking lot. Parking eleven cars on that piece of land could only be an eyesore and would detract from the inherent beauty of the neighborhood. We also have concerns that the egress from the site would cause traffic problems in Sheridan Circle. The traffic study offered by the applicant was dated August 15, 2001. It does not take a traffic expert to know that traffic in August in Washington DC is minimal. A neighbor expressed concern about the cars entering and leaving the property might impact the large tree in public space at the front of the site.

The Sheridan Kalorama Historical Association sent a letter in opposition to the application to be read at the ANC meeting and is attached.

It was then motioned and a resolution was passed to oppose application number 16739.

The Commissioners appointed Marlis S. Carter, SMD 1D02, in whose SMD the application is located, to represent it in this matter.

Sincerely,

Marlis S. Carter
Vice-Chairman ANC 1D

September 18, 2001

Marlis Carter
ANC 1D Commissioner

Dear Marlis:

The purpose of this letter is to provide the ANC 1D with a statement from the Sheridan-Kalorama Historical Association (SKHA) and it's Preservation Review Committee regarding the proposal for 2306 Massachusetts Avenue- the Alice Pike Barney House. This statement was formulated at the September 17, 2001review meeting.

We as an association and committee that represents the neighborhood's interest on all proposed alterations or interventions that impact the nature of the historic district that we live in, feel strongly that the proposed use by Latvia will have a **negative impact** on the neighborhood.

The Sheridan-Kalorama Historical Association was formed to study the architectural and social significance of the neighborhood, which resulted in the successful designation of the neighborhood as an Historic District on September 17, 1989. Having been involved with the comprehensive historic resources survey of the entire neighborhood Sheridan-Kalorama Historical Association feels strongly that the defining elements of our Historic District are based upon the residential units. Any further loss of those attributes has been proven to erode the integrity of the District as it has been defined

The Sheridan-Kalorama Historical Association takes it's mission to protect, maintain, and retain the historic qualities of the neighborhood and it's cultural resources *very seriously*. We strive to retain the historic relationship between buildings and streetscape as well as between buildings and landscape. The SKHA is very sensitive to incompatible uses that can adversely affect the public realm with design issues. Alternate uses for buildings that were constructed in this residential area have proven to result in design issues such as parking, pedestrian/public access (i.e. new sidewalks, widening of existing driveways, and ADA ramps), security elements (i.e. fences, camera's, bollards/barriers, etc), and general maintainability of selected materials and executed design.

Again Sheridan-Kalorama is first a residential neighborhood and this very fact is a contributing element to it's status as an Historic District. The folks that live in the neighborhood value the distinctly residential ambience that enhances the public realm.

Truly on behalf of Sheridan Kalorama Historical Association and it's Preservation Review Committee,

Michael Mills

SKHA-Preservation Review member,
Director of Preservation Services
Architecture
421 7th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004

MARLIS S. CARTER
2131 Bancroft Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008

FAX COVER SHEET

DATE:	September 20, 2001	**TIME:**	
TO:	Ms. Sherry Pruitt	**PHONE:**	
		FAX:	202-727-6072
FROM:	Marlis Carter	**PHONE:**	202-986-0588
		FAX:	202-986-0266
RE:			

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