Coalition for
Smarter Growth
Better Communities ... Less Traffic

BZA 16744

April 23, 2001

D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
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Mr. Eric Price
Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Government of the District of Columbia
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street, NW 11th floor
Washington, DC 20001
Re: 500 New Jersey Avenue, NW and Smarter Growth

Dear Mr. Price:

The Coalition for Smarter Growth is a regional network of environmental and civic groups committed to the revitalization of the District of Columbia. From time to time, we endorse specific development projects. I am writing to encourage your support for a project that can be a centerpiece for smart growth, the proposal by Mr. Jay Hellman for 500 New Jersey Avenue, NW.

The key to intelligent land-use is to put people where the public has already made massive investments in infrastructure. Put people where they can walk to many places important to their daily lives: jobs, shopping, entertainment, and restaurants. Encourage and enable the development of buildings to accommodate this diversity of activities in a pedestrian-friendly form. Denser is better — up to a point. That point is "good design." It has to be attractive. Unless people *want* to be there, they won't. Your vision for NOMA is an important step in the right direction. In our opinion, this project will help you achieve those goals.

Mr. Hellman's proposal for 500 New Jersey Avenue, NW will set an important example of re-invention of the city. It is the right building in a very special place. That the District's existing zoning code doesn't make the development of this building, as proposed, a matter-of-right is unfortunate, because it creates delays and the risk that we will end up with the standard, bland office building and a continued lack of vitality in the neighborhood.

The proposed development is completely consistent with the principles and the philosophy of the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Code. But the restrictions implicit in the Euclidean zoning as written do not apply to this unique site. Simple, straightforward, logical variances are required to fine-tune the zoning so the right building can be built. We are impressed with Mr. Hellman's proposed design for a 12-story, elegant office building that makes maximum use of the site. We urge you to use your office to support the steps necessary to make this project a reality.

Sincerely,

BZA
Case No. 16744
Exhibit No. 29

Stewart Schwartz

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16744
EXHIBIT NO.29