DUPONT PARK CIVIC ASSOCIATION

BECOME AWARE • BECOME INVOLVED

(202) 583-4205

3245 "O" Street, SE
Washington, DC 20020
September 6, 2001

Ms. Sheila Cross Reid
Chairperson, Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 - 4th Street, NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. Reid:

This is in regard to BZA Case # 16753 -- Application of SBA Properties, Inc. to erect a 130-foot monopole cellular tower on a site at the rear of the Penn-Branch Shopping Center, Pennsylvania and Branch Avenues, SE.

We are writing to express our concerns and our opposition to the tower for the reasons indicated herein.

- The proposed tower will sit almost in the back yards of properties in the 3200 block of "O" Street, which is contiguous to the Penn-Branch Shopping Center. Other homes on Branch Avenue, the 3100 blocks of "O", "P", and "Q" Streets, and the 3300 block of Carpenter Street are very, very close to the tower site. The tower would be a monstrosity in plain view of every home in the community for several blocks around. Every time the residents would look out their windows, there the tower would be ---aesthetically unpleasant and a constant reminder of the radiation to which their homes would be exposed every day, all the day long.

BZA Case No. 16753 Exhibit No. 73

Barbara D. Morgan, President
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Freddie Hill, Sergeant-at-Arms

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16753
EXHIBIT NO.73

- In the schematic for the tower project at Penn-Branch prepared for SBA Industries, Inc., (SBA Job #DC04116-S/0130-019) the site layout plan shows that in an area 1/2 block from "O" Street, immediately adjacent to the rear yards of the "O" Street residences, the tower will be constructed in a site that measures 100 feet x 80 feet x 80 feet x 35 feet. The tower equipment would sit on a 5-sided caisson measuring 31 feet x 33 feet x 24 feet x 21 feet x 41 feet. The side of the caisson nearest to the "O" Street residential properties would be only 37 feet from a shed in the backyard of 3235 "O" Street (Lot #805) and 30 feet from the private garage at 3237 "O" Street (Lot #807). The shed and the garage are very near the residences on these properties.

- In addition, the tower yard will be enclosed in only an 8-foot fence. Hardly high enough to be effective in keeping intruders out. The plans indicate that the site shall be graded to cause surface water to flow away from the PCS equipment and the tower. Since the property on which the tower will be sited is on a rather steep hillside above the residences on "O" Street, we can only expect that the water will be directed downhill into the backyards of these adjacent properties. The potential for serious water run-off problems exist for the homeowners. Big problems already exist in this area as the now infamous "O" Street Wall is on the opposite side of the 3200 block of "O" Street.

- Within 200 feet of the proposed tower site, there are 20 detached single-family homes, 2 churches and a Laundromat.

- Within a radius of 2 miles from the proposed tower site, there are 10 DC public schools, 5 private schools, 8 daycare and early childhood development centers. To place a tower in this vicinity would be a clear disregard for the health, safety, and general well-being of the many children who live, play, and go to school in this area.

- Within 2 miles of the proposed tower site, there are 5 cellular towers as follows:

  1) 100-foot monopole in Coral Hill, Maryland, just across the DC/Maryland boundary line at Southern Avenue and Marlboro Pike. (***1.7 miles*** from the tower site in Penn-Branch).

2) At the rear of the commercial strip at 3924 Minnesota Avenue N.E. ***(1.9 miles*** from the tower site in Penn-Branch).

3) Behind the PEPCO Facility and the DC Department of PublicWorks Trash Transfer Station, 3400 Benning Road, N.E. (***1.9 miles*** from the tower site in Penn-Branch).

4) In the rear of the River Terrace Shopping Center, 3921 Benning Road, N.E (***1.5 miles*** from the tower site in Penn-Branch.

5) At 1338 "G" Street, S.E. (DC Government) (***1.5 miles*** from the tower site in Penn-Branch).

- Within a 2-mile radius of the proposed tower site at Penn-Branch, 84 cellular antennas are located on 19 buildings (e.g. churches, service stations, stores, etc) including the Penn-Branch Shopping Center.

- A new tower in Penn-Branch would add to the cumulative effects of the electromagnetic radiation being transmitted by the other five towers to which our community is already exposed 24-hours a day. *We cannot run, and we cannot hide from the cumulative effects of all of this radiation.* Must the preservation of property values and the health and well-being of an entire community take a "back-seat" to the erection of unnecessary and redundant new towers, erected to make money...not to fill a need?

In its many community briefings, SBA Properties claimed that exposure to the low intensity radio-frequency/microwave radiation transmitted by the tower would not be harmful. But we must wonder about this since exposure would be of long duration, as persons living close to the transmission tower could be exposed to the radiation for many hours each day.

Can SBA offer us any guarantees? ....Will the tower be safe? ....Will SBA foot the medical bills for any and all local citizens who develop illness as a result of their facility? .... Can they guarantee stable property values? .... Will they purchase homes and property, at fair market values, if such property becomes devalued or unmarketable as the result of their facility? We don't think so!

It was our experience, that at the many community briefings by SBA Properties on their proposal to erect the monopole in the Penn-Branch Shopping Center, the majority of residents in attendance expressed opposition to the tower. The Dupont Park Civic Association serves a community of approximately 450 households. In our association meetings on November 21, 2000, March 20, 2001, and in our townhall meeting with Mayor Anthony Williams on April 19, 2001, an overwhelming majority of our residents expressed opposition to the Penn-Branch monopole.

The underlying question is, in a nutshell.....*Is the erection of unnecessary and redundant new towers, erected to make money for the wireless industry, more important than the preservation of neighborhoods, property values, and the health and well-being of the community in which they are located?* The continuing proliferation of wireless communications places the citizens under duress to prepare effective arguments in opposing antenna or tower sitings based on perceived risk and potential impacts on health, property values, and local environment. Additional cellular towers and other wireless communication facilities for private cellular phone companies are not inherently beneficial to the community. The name of the game is "Money."

If the five cellular monopoles currently in close proximity to the Penn-Branch site (all within a 2-mile radius of one another) have not eliminated the so-called "dead zones" in the service area where cell phones cannot be dependably made or received, how can it be expected that the Penn-Branch monopole would magically solve the problem? If it cannot, how could SBA Properties possibly justify the existence of another wireless service facility in the Penn-Branch area in the interest of public safety? ***We must not allow the wireless industry to hide behind the public safety shield as they continue to assault our communities with wireless infrastructure.***

In summary, we urge the Board of Zoning Adjustment to not approve the cited application by SBA Properties, Inc. A new tower in the Penn-Branch Shopping Center would be redundant and is unnecessary. Common antennae can be placed on existing towers or buildings. An additional tower is needed only to make money, not to fill a genuine need for additional service. We ask that you not favor a commercial enterprise at the expense of the quality of life of the residents of our community, their investments in their properties, and the general well-being of all.

Please give serious consideration to the concerns expressed in this letter and oppose the construction of the tower.

In closing, we hereby request official **party status** in order to provide testimony in this case at the hearing on September 20, 2001.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara D. Morgan

Barbara D. Morgan
President

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