EHT TRACERIES INC

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TESTIMONY OF EMILY HOTALING EIG

REGARDING BZA APPLICATION NO. 16832

for

2045 14th STREET, N.W. (Square 236, Lots 61, 812 &54)

BEFORE THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

APRIL 30, 2002

INTRODUCTION

My name is Emily Hotaling Eig. I am an architectural historian and historic preservation consultant and the president of EHT Traceries, Inc.

I am here today on behalf of Metropolis Development Company, LLC in regards to the impact of historic preservation issues on the design of the proposed new building.

LOCATION

The new building is proposed for a vacant site located at 14th and V Streets within the Greater U Street Historic District. The site, which is oriented to 14th Street, faces the massive public Reeves Center. To its west is a large public park under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. To its north are the modest two-story residences along the north side of V Street, while to the south, is a row of small-scale commercial buildings and a large new residential building.

Although planned for a vacant site, the design for the new building was fully reviewed by the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) for its compatibility with the significant characteristics of the 14th Street Historic District.

BZA
Case No. 16832
Exhibit No. 34

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16832
EXHIBIT NO.34

THE GREATER U STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

My firm undertook the survey of the majority of historic resources within the area that is now designated as the Greater U Street Historic District and prepared the historic district application. I would like to present to you a brief discussion of the characteristics of the 14 Street Historic District that provided the basis for the HPRB's decision to approve this building.

- Greater U Street and the intersecting 14th Street was one of the first areas in northwest Washington to respond to the development pressures of the young city. Together, they illustrate the significant patterns of transportation-based development.

- The area is dominated by major commercial and transportation corridors lined with large and small buildings, which are flanked by intact rows of Victorian housing and commercial buildings. Like the Greater 14th Street Historic District to the south, the streetscape is punctuated by the mass and height of important local churches and public buildings, grand and discrete turn-of-the-century apartment buildings, and a rich variety of twentieth-century transportation-related structures.

- As one of the three initial routes of the streetcar, 14th Street is the central axis of the area, intersecting with U Street to form the traditional center of the area's public activity.

- The area maintains a distinctly urban character, mixing residential, institutional, religious, commercial, and entertainment uses within the context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architecture.

- The mix of low and tall buildings, small and large in mass, is a specific characteristic of the Greater U Street Historic District.

It is necessary to keep in mind that the design for the building under consideration had to respond to numerous factors:

- Site Limitations and Opportunities
  - WMATA tunnels and alley call for the building to be pushed up and wide over entire site
  - Opportunity to take advantage of large park to east

- Community Interests
  - Mixed use (retail, arts, residential)
  - Affordable housing
  - Attractive building with amenities

- Zoning Requirements
  - Complex programming
  - Arts Overlay
  - Service requirements

To these must be added, two critical HPRB requirements:

1. Pushing back the taller mass of the structure away from 14th Street towards the open park space
2. Masking the back of house services from the historic streetscape

CONCLUSION

There is a real tension between the requirements of historic preservation, the physical reality of the site, and the city's codes. In order to develop the proposed building, compromises are required on the part of Metropolis. A reorientation of the building mass that cannot take advantage of the matter of right zoning that applies to the site will be necessary. The historic preservation constraints are particularly unique for this site given its location on Fourteenth Street, its adjacency to some of the smaller contributing buildings in the historic district, and the need to bisect the site with an alley easement. I urge you to support the waivers requested in order to allow this building to be built in a manner that will balance the demands of the city, the community, and historic preservation in a meaningful way.