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June 14, 2002

Cathy Wiss, Chair
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3F
3810 Albemarle Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Commissioner Wiss,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington, D.C. Chapter of Sierra Club to express concerns about The Washington Home's (TWH) proposal to expand its parking lot to accommodate an additional 98 automobiles. Sierra Club has more than 3,000 members living Washington, D.C., some of whom live in the neighborhood surrounding TWH and have raised concerns about the environmental impacts of this proposed expansion.

As I am sure you know, the Washington, D.C. region suffers from significant air quality problems caused largely by motor vehicle emissions. Poor air quality has been linked with asthma and other serious health problems. Sierra Club has undertaken a major regional campaign to improve air quality by promoting smart growth principles to decrease the number and length of automobile trips on our region's roads. These principles encourage locating a diverse mix of uses, including housing, retail, restaurants and office space, around Metro stops and along bus lines to encourage people to take public transportation, walk or ride bicycles instead of driving.

Another serious problem associated with increased paved surfaces is stormwater runoff, which washes highly toxic substances like gasoline and antifreeze from these surfaces when it rains, polluting Rock Creek, the Potomac and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. The District's existing stormwater/wastewater system is already overburdened, and any new paved surfaces will exacerbate these problems, harming our already polluted waterways.

While we take no position on TWH's proposed four-room building expansion, we are greatly concerned that the proposed parking lot expansion of 98 spaces would only serve to encourage more people to drive rather than choosing other, less polluting transportation alternatives. Our

BZA
Case No. 16836
Exhibit No. 51

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16836
EXHIBIT NO.51

concern is heightened by the fact that this part of the city is very well served by public transportation, including Metro's Red Line and a number of Metro bus routes.

We urge your Commission to encourage TWH to fully explore alternatives to a significant parking lot expansion and incorporate these alternatives into its proposal. We suggest that TWH: (1) document the need for the requested 98 additional parking spaces; (2) offer its employees a public transportation subsidy like Metrocheck to decrease the need for parking; (3) facilitate carpooling among its employees to decrease the need for parking; and (4) control the unauthorized use of its parking lot to ensure that existing spaces are available to eligible employees and visitors.

We would be happy to provide your Commission, community residents and TWH with additional information, if needed. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 202-299-0745.

Sincerely,

Jason E. Broehm
Chair, Parks and Land Use Committee