# HQ ACQUISITION, LLC

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2002 FEB -7 AM 11: 38

February 5, 2002

**VIA FACSIMILE AND HAND DELIVERY**

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, N.W.
Suite 210 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: BZA Case No. 16857 - 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.

To the Board of Zoning Adjustment:

HQ Acquisition, LLC, hereby respectfully requests that the Board of Zoning Adjustment expedite review of BZA Case No. 16857, Application for Variances and a Special Exception for 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., filed on Friday, February 1, 2002. See Section 3116 of the Zoning Regulations of the District of Columbia, 11 D.C.M.R. § 3116 (2002). Also, pursuant to this provision, the owner's attorney, Leonard A. Zax, has been instructed to submit to the District of Columbia Office of Planning a request that that Office support expedited consideration.

As set forth in greater detail in the Application, the former Sears/Hechinger building at 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., presents a unique opportunity to bring a creative mixed-use residential/retail development to the District that will be integrated immediately into the Metrorail system to one of the District's priority areas. This kind of high-density, transit-oriented development is a paragon of smart growth and significantly advances several important goals set forth in the District's Comprehensive Plan. Moreover, the project is being developed with full commitment both to preserving and restoring the historical legacy of the old Sears Department Store, one of finest examples of art deco retail development in the country, and to bringing the highest quality design to the new residential addition.

Expedited treatment is warranted in this case because of the extraordinary challenges of developing mixed-use residential and retail on this site and the strong community desire for the project to move forward rapidly. The history of attempts to develop retail uses on this site have been fraught with difficulties. Sears, which built the building in 1940 and operated there for over fifty years, concluded that the property no longer was economically viable as a department store. Hechinger unfortunately went bankrupt. The present owner, who acquired the property out of bankruptcy, has been working closely with the community and District officials to create a mixed-use project that the neighborhood applauds and that the District of Columbia Office of Planning strongly supports to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

Creating a successful retail development, moreover, is an extremely time-sensitive endeavor. If this project is not able to remain on a schedule to have retail uses in the building by

BZA
Case No. 16857
Exhibit No. 21

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16857
EXHIBIT NO.21

the holiday shopping season, the owner's ability to attract and retain quality retail will be significantly diminished.

The development of 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. has presented many design, historic preservation and planning challenges, and the project is nearing a critical stage. The market conditions for moving forward with this project are ideal at the moment, given current interest rates and the status of the financing necessary to make the project a reality. If the owner is unable to begin final planning and advanced architectural work within the next three months, the owner will likely lose the window of opportunity to complete the project successfully.

For all these reasons, and in order to ensure the success of this great opportunity for 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. to play a role in strengthening the neighborhood, HQ Acquisition, LLC respectfully requests expedited consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard Lake
for HQ Acquisition, LLC

cc: Mr. Andrew Altman, District of Columbia Office of Planning
Ms. Ellen McCarthy, District of Columbia Office of Planning
Mr. John Fondersmith, District of Columbia Office of Planning