ANC 3F

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3F
NORTH CLEVELAND PARK / FOREST HILLS

3F01 - Phil Kogan
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April 2, 2002

Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman
D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 – 4th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

RE: BZA Application No. 16857
4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. (The Sears/Hechinger's Building)

Dear Chairman Griffis:

Enclosed please find ANC 3F Resolution 02-10 concerning BZA Application No. 16857, which was adopted 5-1-0 at a duly-noticed public meeting on March 18, 2002, with a quorum present (a quorum being 4 commissioners). Although this project is in ANC 3E, residents of ANC 3F will be affected by this proposal because the building, which is less than two blocks from ANC 3F, is clearly visible from several locations within ANC 3F and ANC 3F will experience traffic and parking generated by the proposed project.

The Resolution recommends that the Applicant agree not to lease or sell air rights above the site without first obtaining approval from the residential tenants and the ANC(s); that the Applicant explore using the unused ramps to the roof for additional recreation space; that the Fire Marshall review the variance requested for the width of the one-way parking lanes; and that the Applicant prepare a traffic study. We understand that the Applicant will agree to come back to the ANCs if at some future time it wishes to lease or sell air rights and that the Applicant has entered into discussion with DDOT about a traffic study.

Sincerely,

Cathy Wiss

Cathy Wiss, Chair

Cc: Jill Diskan, Chair, ANC 3E
Tad DiBiase, Commissioner, ANC 3E03
Andrew Altman, Director, D.C. Office of Planning
Ken Laden, DDOT, Intermodal Planning

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BZA
Case No. 16857
Exhibit No. 29

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16857
EXHIBIT NO.29

Res. 02- 10

ANC 3F RESOLUTION CONCERNING BZA APPLICATION NO. 16857 FOR 4500 WISCONSIN AVENUE, N.W. (SEARS/HECHINGER'S BUILDING)

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3F
North Cleveland Park and Forest Hills
P.O. Box 39290
Washington, D.C. 20016-9290

WHEREAS, an application has been filed for 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., requesting a variance for a five-foot increase in height to 70 feet for the proposed residential addition; a variance in onsite recreation space for residential tenants from 29,400 sq. ft. to 9,300 sq. ft., a two-thirds reduction; a variance for reduction of the width of one-way parking lanes from 17' to 14'6"; and a special exception for a 61-space reduction in required retail parking on site (from 211 to 150 spaces); and

WHEREAS, 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., is located within ANC 3E, but is less than two blocks outside ANC 3F and will be within 200 feet of ANC 3F once redistricting takes effect in the next few months, when the boundary between the ANCs at this location will become Wisconsin Avenue; and

WHEREAS, residents of ANC 3F will be affected by the variances and special exception requested for this building because the building is visible from ANC 3F; the streets of ANC 3F will be used by traffic to and from the retail and residential uses proposed for the building; and residents of ANC 3F have traditionally shopped at stores at this location; and

WHEREAS, on October 15, 2001, ANC 3F passed Resolution 01-22 not objecting to the concept of adding four floors of housing above the historic store, stating that residents of ANC 3F support this plan as "an appropriate way to add new housing to Tenleytown" and believe it to be consistent with the D.C. Comprehensive Plan; and on February 7, 2002, the Historic Preservation Review Board approved the concept of a four-story residential addition on top of the historic store with significant setbacks from Wisconsin Avenue and Albemarle Street; and

WHEREAS, most residents of ANC 3F have not stated they are opposed to the proposed five-foot increase in height, but some have expressed concern that air rights on the roof may be leased or sold for commercial structures, like antennas, not related to the onsite use of residential and retail tenants, as is becoming a common practice on rented residential and commercial buildings, thereby increasing their appearance of height; and

WHEREAS, residents of ANC 3F have asked that at least one parking space be made available for each residential unit to reduce spill-over parking in the neighborhoods; and the plans show 188 parking spaces in parallel, angled, and tandem configuration on the existing roof for 185 apartments (although the text states that there will be 170 parking spaces), and

WHEREAS, using the entire roof for parking limits the amount of space available for recreation on this level, but some space for recreation might be found on the two ramps to the roof marked "not used", in particular the ramp facing Eldbrooke Church; and

WHEREAS, the parking configuration shows one-way lanes at a width of 14'6" for both residential and retail levels; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant has not provided to ANC 3F a traffic study to show whether the surrounding area can support the traffic generated by the retail uses and 185 residential units proposed and whether the significantly lower number of parking spaces allocated for retail customers on site than required by zoning will be sufficient to accommodate all the customers and keep them from parking on neighborhood streets, although ANC 3F understands the Applicant controls an easement for 100 parking spaces in a parking garage across Wisconsin Avenue; nor has the Applicant divulged the type of retailers that are expected to occupy the building so that the ANC can determine whether customers are likely to travel on foot, by subway, or by car;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: ANC 3F does not object to a five-foot variance in height for the residential portion of the building provided that the variance is conditioned on an agreement that the Applicant not lease or sell air rights above the site without first obtaining approval from the residential tenants and the ANC(s); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: ANC 3F recommends that the Applicant explore using the unused ramps to the roof for recreational purposes, such as for an exercise course or for terraced plantings and walkways (subject to HPRB approval), in order to increase the recreational uses available for residents and to improve air quality; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: ANC 3F recommends that the variance for the width of the one-way parking lanes, which could be an impediment to access by emergency vehicles, be conditioned on approval from the Fire Marshall; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: ANC 3F recommends the Applicant prepare a traffic study to determine (1) whether the road system can absorb traffic from 185 residential units and three retailers; (2) whether the parking is adequate for prospective residents and customers, considering the type of stores planned and pedestrian and public transit access; and (3) whether adjustments should be made to traffic signals and patterns surrounding the site to mitigate any adverse impacts from the development, to ensure pedestrian safety, and to improve traffic management; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: Commissioner Cathy Wiss be appointed to represent ANC 3F at the hearing before the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

Approved by a vote of 5-1-0 at a duly noticed public meeting on March 18, 2002, with a quorum present.

Cathy Wiss

Cathy Wiss, Chair

David J. Bardin, Secretary