GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Office of the Director

April 18, 2002

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Mr. Geoffrey Griffis
Chairman
DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Second Floor
Washington, DC 20001

Re: BZA Application No. 16865, 916-918 G Street, NW

Dear Chairman Griffis:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the applicant of BZA Application No. 16865, 916-918 G Street, N.W., to support their request for a variance for a reduction in the amount of residential recreation space, and to allow for the expansion of a non-conforming penthouse to a conforming penthouse.

As you are aware, the District of Columbia Government, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) developed the initial Request for Proposal (RFP) criteria for sale of the Mather Building. During the selection process, we aggressively challenged each participant to provide the maximum economically feasible amount of arts incubator and affordable housing space in the Mather Building. We pursued and received concessions from the applicant on these uses to maximize the return to the District and the community from selling the Mather Building. After providing for these uses (approximately 17,000 square feet), the remaining space in the building is market rate condominiums and related parking in the basement. It is these uses that will create the value to pay the costs of providing the affordable housing and arts space. To satisfy the recreation space requirement, the applicant must convert market rate condominium space into non-saleable recreation space, creating a serious unanticipated and undue financial burden on the applicant.

BZA
Case No. 16865
Exhibit No. 25

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16865
EXHIBIT NO.25

We believe that there are several additional extenuating circumstances relating to the applicants' request for the variances, which justify their position. The building is an existing mid-block structure that occupies 92 percent of the lot, so there is effectively no area that can be devoted to recreation space at grade level. The historic designation of the building does not allow for modifications to the building for exterior balconies. Elevator access to the roof deck is not possible due to height limitations of the existing structure. Stair access to the roof for all residents of the building will not comply with ADA requirements. Further, access to the roof for all of the buildings' residents would require the applicant to install emergency exit stairwells by converting market rate condominium space on the tenth floor of the building into non-saleable stairwells. We also understand that the penthouse structure, as proposed, is a conforming structure with appropriate setbacks for favorable site lines.

We also feel it is important to note that the residents of the Mather Building can use the 6,600 square feet of arts incubator space to be located on the first and second floors of the Mather Building anytime for a nominal fee, subsidized by the applicant having leased this space to the Cultural Development Corporation for ten years at a rental rate substantially below current market rates. This interactive space is designed to attract and service the arts community throughout the District. Activities will include art exhibits, other arts related events, studio workspaces, auditions and rehearsals, which, in our opinion, represent a suitable substitute for recreation space in the Mather Building.

Finally, there is a Fitness and Aquatic Center operated by the YWCA located next door to the Mather Building. The applicant and YWCA representatives are working together to promote use of these facilities by the residents of the Mather Building.

For the above reasons, I support the applicant's request that relief be granted.

Respectfully,

Stanley Jackson
Director