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Chair,
Human Rights, Latino Affairs &
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2nd Vice Chair,
Board of Directors, WMATA/Metro

May 7, 2002

Chairman Geoffrey Griffis
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th St. NW
Room 220
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Chairman Griffis:

I am writing to you in my capacity as Ward 1 Councilman and as a member of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors to express my strong support for a project which will be brought before the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) on May 14, 2002. This project is located within the U Street Historic District at the Southwest corner of 13th & U Street, N.W., on top of the Metro escalators. I consider this new development to be critical to the continued revitalization of the entire 14th & U Streets corridors. The building will be a four-story office and retail project with the District of Columbia Department of Mental Health as the primary office tenant relocating from the Pride Building at 16th & U Street. The first floor will have a retail component.

Although this site is located on one of the most prominent corners in the U Street area, there are significant challenges to its development due to the physical restrictions imposed by the existence of the Metro escalators, handicap elevator and underground tunnels, facilities and WMATA easements. These physical restrictions require the developer to seek special exception for relief from the BZA to deviate from the ARTS Overlay design standard in two minor respects and to reduce the amount of required parking as a result of an impossibility to provide an underground garage.

Over the past year I have reviewed numerous renderings and elevations of the project and have encouraged the developers to seek an architectural context for the building, which will be wholly consistent with existing historic buildings throughout the 14th & U Streets area. In addition, I have reviewed the developer's application to the BZA and am fully in support of the requested relief. As you may know, this project has received approval from the Historic Preservation Review Board, has been endorsed by the Office of Planning and has received approval from ANC 1B.

I am in support of this project and hope that it receives an expeditious approval from the Board of Zoning Adjustment. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Jim Graham

BZA
Case No. 16868
Exhibit No. 24

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16868
EXHIBIT NO.24