1901 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

July 16, 2002

D.C. BOARD OF ZONING
2002 JUL 19 PM 3:29

Mr. Geoffry Griffis
Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Griffis:

As a resident and active member of the Greater U Street community, I am writing to urge you to reject The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge's (the Lodge) application for a special exception for accessory parking (Case # 16901) at 1906 Vermont Avenue, NW (Square: 333 Lots: 824 and 825). This application will be considered on July 23, 2002, at the Board of Adjustment hearing.

Over the last several years, I painstakingly restored the exterior of my home to be in keeping with the residential character of the neighborhood. This property, which stood vacant for 20 years, was an eye sore and detracted from the neighborhood. What I saw was the beautiful architecture of the building and envisioned what it could be. It is time for the Lodge to take a look at its properties, which detract from the neighborhood, and work with the community to restore the residential character of the neighborhood.

The Lodge describes itself as an organization that "works constantly to establish and maintain a purposeful community presence." Their community presence has been less than purposeful when they fail to adhere to District of Columbia zoning laws that the rest of us must abide by. The private parking lot the Lodge currently operates at 1902 Vermont Avenue, directly across the street from my home, has not been screened from residential property by a brick wall or evergreen hedges; members of the Lodge traveling north on Vermont Avenue enter the lot from the south bound lane for approximately 40 feet instead of going around the block; Lodge members congregate in the parking lot after their meetings, between 10:30 p.m. and 11:00 pm., and can be heard from across the street; litter is apparent in the tree boxes outside of the property; there is no evidence that the Lodge obtained any permits to pave over the parking lot (with no drainage being provided); and the Lodge rents out parking spaces during the day to the general public.

The Lodge's authority to utilize the site as a parking lot officially terminated on June 4, 1992 when their certificate of occupancy (CFO) expired – ten years ago. Does this warrant a 9-space expansion of the parking lot? The parking lot already accommodates 8 more parking

BZA
Case No. 16901
Exhibit No. 31

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16901
EXHIBIT NO.31

spaces than their original special exemption permits. The government of the District of Columbia has not cited the Lodge for these zoning infractions, even though the community has brought it to the attention of the zoning enforcement authorities. It appears that the community is held to a higher standard than Lodge.

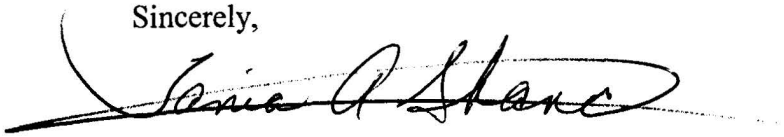
Under the "Findings of Fact" section of the report the Zoning Board issued on June 4, 1982 regarding the Lodge's request (application number 13675) for a private parking lot at 1902 Vermont Avenue (Square 333, Lot 800), it states, "There was no opposition to the application at the public hearing of record." As the result, the Board granted the Lodge's special exemption request.

Today there is *strong and well documented* opposition to the Lodge's request for a special exemption at 1906 Vermont Avenue and 1902 Vermont Avenue. As a neighborhood that is working to rebuild itself and restore its residential character, attempts to expand and sustain uses that are non-residential should be closely scrutinized by the community and our elected officials and representatives, and only permitted if they serve an extremely compelling public interest.

In this case, that standard has not been met and the Lodge's request to expand the parking lot should be denied.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Tania A. Shand