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Mr. Geoffrey Griffis
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW; Suite 210-S
Washington, DC 20001
Via fax: 202-727-6072

Re: Letter in Opposition to Jemal's Wheel project; Application # 16924 at 1701 Kalorama Road, NW:

- Variance from loading berth requirements of Section 2201
- Special exception from the maximum permitted height requirements under Section 1403.1

To Chairman Griffis and other members of the BZA:

I am writing to urge to BZA to oppose the aforementioned special exception and variance in conjunction with the 1701 Kalorama Road, NW project. As currently proposed (57' plus roof structure), the project will violate the tenets of the Reed-Cooke Overlay District, and have a negative impact on the community.

The Reed-Cooke Overlay, adopted in the early 1990's after significant community input and support, was developed as a vision for future redevelopment in the neighborhood. Its' purpose is to not only "provide for the development of new housing" (in part), but "maintain heights and densities at appropriate levels" as well as "encourage small scale business development that will not adversely affect the residential community." It sought to balance commercial enterprises and residential development in order to preserve and maintain one of the historic characteristics of the neighborhood. It further imposed height and density restrictions in order to preserve the overall scale of the area.

The 1701 Kalorama Road project seeks to set those precedents and vision aside. It would add housing to the neighborhood, which the Reed-Cooke Overlay District seeks to promote, but would do so at the expense of the height and density restrictions that are equally important in the overlay. In order to achieve its desired height and density, it seeks a number of variances and special exceptions from the provisions of the Overlay. It does not meet the requirements for obtaining a height variance as the project fails to meet the "practical difficulty" test.

Importantly, the Reed-Cooke Overlay does not prioritize among its three stated purposes. Indeed, it makes the promotion of housing, the maintenance of height and density levels and the development of small businesses equally important. Its' purpose is to achieve a balance among those goals. The Jemal's Wheel project would clearly upset that carefully negotiated balance.

BZA
Case No. 16924
Exhibit No. 43

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16924
EXHIBIT NO.43

I have attended numerous meetings between the developer, the local Councilmember and other concerned areas residents to try and negotiate to bring this project within the requirements of the Reed-Cooke Overlay. While the negotiations have moved in a positive direction, the developer's insistence on maintaining a height of 57' for this project, as well as insisting on a residential development have created an impasse with the community. I, as a member of the community, welcome the redevelopment of the building, but am committed to maintaining the integrity of the Overlay.

Interestingly, at a recent 1C Advisory Neighborhood Commission meeting at which the developer presented his 57' project proposal, not a single member of the community spoke in favor of the project, although community members did speak in favor of a residential development. The proposed height of the building, and its impact on the traffic and congestion of the neighborhood remain important, unresolved concerns.

I also oppose the granting of a variance from the loading berth requirements of Section 2201. The developer maintains that the community supported moving the loading dock from the rear of the building to 17th Street. No one from the community has been identified as supporting that move, and in fact, I am not aware that the Reed-Cooke Neighborhood Association in fact supports the move. The street is approximately 30 feet wide, with parking on both sides of the street. Even with parking removed from one side of the street, the impact of garbage, delivery and moving trucks idling and occupying 17th Street will be severe. Fire and emergency vehicles would have great difficulty getting past such vehicles.

I do not believe the community can or should dictate to an owner how he or she should develop a parcel of land. I do not believe the community in this instance is attempting to force the developer to choose either residential or commercial. I personally support either residential or commercial development as long as it conforms to the tenets of the Reed-Cooke Overlay. According to the developer's own economic feasibility study, a commercial venture moving into the building at its current height would be economically feasible. In fact, the developer turned down a viable commercial tenant earlier in the year.

In conclusion, I am not opposed to development of 1701 Kalorama Road, NW. However, I do not believe that this development, as proposed, fully acknowledges or abides by the spirit nor letter of the Reed-Cooke Overlay District, and I therefore ask you to respect the wishes of the community and reject the requested special exception from maximum permitted height requirements as well as the requested variance from the loading dock requirements.

Sincerely,

James R. Schufreider
1661 Crescent Place, NW; #607
Washington, DC 20009