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December 4, 2002

Transmitted Via Facsimile: 202-727-6072

Mr. Geoffrey Griffis et al.
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210-S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Opposition To The Application Of Jemal's Wheel, L.L.C.; 1701 Kalorama Road, N.W.
BZA Application No. 16924

Dear Chairman Griffis and Members of the Board of Zoning Administration (the "BZA"):

The purpose of my letter is to urge the BZA to oppose Jemal's Wheel Application for a special exception – or more appropriately, for a variance – for the proposed height of the 1701 Kalorama Road N.W. project (the "Project"). I write in opposition not because I object to developing either the particular property in question or the neighborhood as a whole, but because I believe the Project at its proposed height (1) runs headlong into the spirit and letter of the Reed-Cooke Overlay District, (2) will not mix well the current blend of low-scale residential and commercial projects, and (3) will decrease unnecessarily the light and air available to the surrounding neighborhood.

Overlay districts have been referred to as fine-grained planning and zoning controls in various locations throughout the District of Columbia. The Reed-Cooke Overlay is one such district, which was adopted after significant neighborhood input and was designed to achieve goals particular to the district's unique characteristics. Among the express purposes of the Reed-Cooke Overlay is to "[p]rotect current housing in the area and provide for the development of new housing" and "[m]aintain heights and densities at appropriate levels." 11 D.C.M.R. §1400.2(a)(1)-(2). Clearly then, the Reed-Cooke Overlay envisions these two goals to be achieved together rather than be mutually exclusive. And to expect otherwise would be to ignore the history of the District, which has long been known for its development in accordance with strict height restrictions.

In order to maintain the "appropriate [height] levels" desired by the Reed Cooke Overlay, the Overlay established a maximum height of 40 feet (plus roof structure) or a maximum height of 50 feet "with appropriate setbacks from the street" (plus roof structures) if the BZA determines that the project satisfies the low and moderate income household units requirements set forth in 1402.1. 11 D.C.M.R. §1402.1. As you are aware, the Project, at its proposed height, is 57 feet (plus a roof structure). Based on a review of Jemal's Wheel Application, however, the Project's presence in the neighborhood will loom much larger than 57 feet. For example, on top of the 57 foot building, the Project plans show another 3 ½ feet of height for "architectural embellishments." Added to that is another 8 feet of penthouse area, which appears to cover a fair percentage of the building footprint. Added to

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that appears to be another 7 feet for the high roof elevator tower. All told, we in the neighborhood, will be looking at a building that reaches 75 ½ feet at its tallest point. Even excluding the roof elevator tower, the overall building height, when including roof structures, will be 68 ½ feet.

In addition, I would like to note that the Project plan appears to show that the building height is 57 feet from the northern point on 17th Street. *See* Exhibit D. Assuming as correct Jemal's Wheel calculations that the site has an elevation difference of approximately 17 feet, *see* Application at 6, I interpret this as meaning that the building height measured from the southern portion of 17th Street will be 74 feet without roof structures. Although Jemal's Wheel may be correct in stating that the Project is in a "bowl" vis-à-vis those North of the Project, it certainly is not as to those located in other directions from the Project. For example, those living in two-story townhouses on Ontario Road, who are actually on a lower grade than the Project site, and those living in two-story townhouses at the bottom of 17th Street and on Kalorama Road will be looking directly at an enormous façade. Moreover, because the façade does not appear to be set-back from the property line, the building will look (and feel) its height. In these important ways, the Project therefore fails to "[p]rotect adjacent and nearby residences from damaging ... environmental, social, and aesthetic impacts." *See* 11 D.C.M.R. §1400.2(c).

In short, I encourage Jemal's Wheel to develop the property should it so wish – only do so in keeping with the spirit and letter of the Reed-Cooke Overlay.

Sincerely,

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