16930

WM CHAPIN
ARCHITECT

8 October 2002

Chairman Geoffrey Griffis
District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, N.W., Suite 210 South
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Chairman Griffis,

I am writing in enthusiastic support of the building which the National Association of Realtors (NAR) wishes to place at 500 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., designed by Graham Gund Architects.

From the moment the NAR was able to secure the site for their new Washington headquarters they have worked diligently to arrive at the right building for this special place. They spent considerable money and energy to invite some of the continent's best architects to submit their ideas for the site, then they engaged three of Washington's most distinguished and thoughtful architects to help them make the choice of the winning design. Those jurists, all of whom have a deep respect, understanding and affection for Washington and her architecture, were:

Colden Florance, FAIA	Principal of his own DC architectural firm for many years and current partner of the SmithGroup, Architects.
Harry Robinson, III, FAIA	Former Dean of the Howard University School of Architecture and current Chair of the National Capital Planning Commission.
George F. White, FAIA	Architect of the Capital for 25 years and current advisor to Leo Daly Architects

At the end of the selection process each of these architects, along with the NAR's own participants, enthusiastically endorsed the Gund building. Let me articulate the reasons for the appropriateness of their selection.

1. It is a singularly beautiful building. Nearly everyone who has seen the design reacts with excitement to its beauty, clarity and simplicity of form. It projects a design continuity that makes it immediately understandable the first moment it is seen. Its lace-like mast, the intricate sun shades of the south elevation and the scale and detail of its east entry canopy contrast brilliantly with the sleek, voluptuous curve of its seamless glass skin.

BZA
Case No. 16930
Exhibit No. 71

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16930
EXHIBIT NO.71

FELLOW, THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
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2. It fits. Obviously it physically fits the site by virtue of its floor plan shape, height and volume. It's massing is consistent with the surrounding structures which makes it compatible in size and scale - all of which are exactly consistent with the pre-approved dimensions and intent of previously granted variances. The surrounding buildings currently have no design consistency, so the addition of the NAR building will contribute a new design presence to the immediate architectural environs that, by virtue of its singular quality, will unquestionably be architecturally enriching.

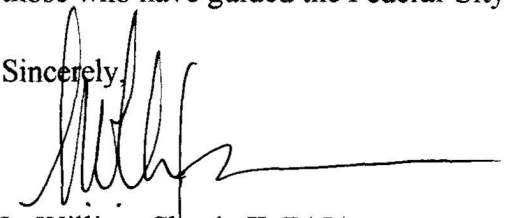
It continues a Washington architectural tradition. Most Americans think of Washington as a traditional city. Yet it is rich with exceptional examples of groundbreaking innovation in architecture and design, which started with Pierre l'Enfant's extraordinary master plan for the Federal City.

One of the earliest of these examples was the Octagon House, located just west of the White House. Octagon House was occupied just months after "the President's House" in 1800 and was shockingly innovative and unprecedented for its time, and it lives to this day as a revered icon of timeless design. It's design brilliance has caused it to grow old gracefully so that today we think of it as a first class example of traditional architecture, while it was in its time startlingly modern.

Moving forward in time, many other edifices, such as the Washington Monument and the East Wing of the National Gallery, share the same tradition of innovation, agelessness, and appeal. Only time will tell, but many think that Gund's building has the stuff to join this tradition.

I hope that your Board will embrace this design with the enthusiasm that so many others who have seen it have already expressed. I firmly believe that its addition to the fabric of our nation's capital will speak glowingly for a long time to come of Washington, and of the leadership of those who have guided the Federal City's shape over the centuries.

Sincerely,



L. William Chapin II, FAIA
1994 President, the American Institute of Architects
Former President and CEO, the American Architectural Foundation
Chairman, the NAR Architectural Jury
Architect