11/12/02

A Statement to the DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
Re: Application #16943

It is time we looked at the consquences of an exact and narrow interpretation of the zoning laws and regulations of the District of Columbia.

We should examine the major impact the proposed eleven-story, 140-foot high office building at 1121 14th Street NW (Square 247, Lots 868 & 869 near the Thomas Circle Holiday Inn) will have on Thomas House, a Continuing Care Residential Community (CCRC)--one of only three in the District. Thomas House is a 10-story, 90-foot-high building at 1330 Massachusetts Avenue NW (Ward 2, 2FO3). (While the front of the building faces Mass. Ave. many of the apartments in the "T"-shape building look out onto 14th Street.) There is a basement, a garage, and on the lower level there are offices, conference rooms and gathering areas for resident and ambulatory patients. A small grocery and beauty parlor are available for those too frail to go outside. The first floor has a lobby, a dining room, meeting rooms, exercise area and a post office. In short, it is home to approximately one-hundred-twenty-five, long-term, tax-paying, elderly residents living on floors four through ten. On the second floor is a fifty-bed licensed nursing-home facility.

A fund-raising campaign was inaugurated in October, 2002, to raise $800,000 for an assisted-living unit on floor three. This unit will house thirty additional patients with special needs. Over two-hundred people are projected to live in Thomas House--at present, there are about one-hundred-seventy-five. Approximately one-hundred-twenty-five persons are employed at Thomas House to care for the residents and patients.

The facility is undergoing a thorough interim renovation of the public areas and apartments. The Marketing Office has initiated a strong campaign to attract new residents using a large and well-known advertising firm. In summary, the costly expansion of much needed services to residents and potential consumers will be greatly hampered by an office building blocking the sky. Approximately 70 residents face 14th Street NW--sixty-five face Massachusetts Avenue.

A viable, essential, non-profit, church-sponsored health facility for the elderly is being jeopardized. It should be protected against commercial development. Perhaps a transitional compromise could be devised.

A bill to license CCRCs went before the City Council on November 7th sponsored by Mr. Fenty, co-sponsored by Mr. Catania, and Mrs. Schwartz. It is designed to license CCRCs and to protect the elderly. Beautification of Thomas Circle now in progress affords DC the opportunity to be innovative and put an attraction of merit along Thomas Circle streets. One more office building fails to meet that test.

Respectfully submitted,

Miriam Trimble
Resident of Thomas House

Case No. 16943
Exhibit No. 31

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16943
EXHIBIT NO.31