Statement of Leslie L. Buhler
Executive Director
Tudor Place Historic House and Garden
Tudor Place Foundation, Inc.
To the Board of Zoning Administration
April 15, 2003
(original date of hearing postponed due to snow: February 18, 2003)

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Board of Zoning Administration:

I am Leslie Buhler, Executive Director of Tudor Place Historic House and Garden. I am pleased to be here to represent the Board of Trustees and staff of Tudor Place in its renewal application for a special exception to operate as a museum. My statement this morning is a supplement to the written statement submitted with the application.

Since coming to Tudor Place in June of 2000, I have made a commitment to being responsive to our immediate neighbors, to be a presence in the community in order to raise awareness of the importance of Tudor Place historically, culturally, and architecturally and to build trust in Tudor Place as a valuable asset to Georgetown. I am particularly sensitive to the importance of Tudor Place respecting the neighborhood because I live in the District and have wrestled with zoning issues in my neighborhood.

Tudor Place is a young museum and has had its growing pains. Over the last 2 and one half years I have worked to reorganize Tudor Place operations in order to preserve the site and share its rich history with the public. We now have a small professional staff to manage the diverse and extensive collections including the substantial collection of objects from Mount Vernon and 200-year old trees and shrubs.

We have received a Save America's Treasures grant to address water infiltration and a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services is pending. It will fund a comprehensive conditions assessment report on the seven historic buildings on the site and the 5 ½ acres of cultivated landscape.

We have an interpretation effort underway to examine how to present Tudor Place to the public in the most educational and accessible manner. We are currently researching the slaves, free blacks, and servants who worked at Tudor Place so that the full story of the site can be told. We are working with a class in public history at American University to do research and conduct visitor surveys. We will also conduct focus groups of people from across the District so that the story of Tudor Place is more accessible to a broader range of people.

Since I have been at Tudor Place, we have adhered to the Board's ruling of 1999. The conditions under the renewal remain largely the same with a few changes that clarify and further restrict the activities of the Foundation. It is our intention to continue to build neighborhood trust so that at some point we can apply for a permanent exception.

BZA
Case No. 16974
Exhibit No. 67

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 16974
EXHIBIT NO. 67

The proposed conditions were developed through a transparent process with neighbors. In October 2002 Tudor Place sent a letter to neighbors notifying them of our need to submit an application to the Board of Zoning Adjustment and asking for any concerns they might have. Four positive responses were received about current operations. In November a draft of the conditions was distributed to mailboxes of surrounding homes. We then extended an invitation to a meeting to discuss the conditions. A group of 9 people came to the meeting including Mindy Kotler, Ron Snider, Don Crockett, Gretchen Handwerger, Ross Watson, Marion Goldin and Jerry Rosen, and Peter Pulsifer and Jason Hurdle from the ANC. The group reviewed the draft conditions point by point and made changes to them.

The revised conditions were distributed once again to neighbors with a request for any concerns or questions. None was received although Mr. Snider called to offer to pay the prorated expense of the application if we would agree to apply for three years instead of five.

The conditions were posted on our website at the request of neighbors and a notice was put in the newsletter of the Citizens Association of Georgetown about the posting. We encouraged people to call with questions or concerns or if someone wanted a copy of the conditions in print.

Both the Georgetown Current and the Georgetowner ran editorials in support of our application. I would like to submit photocopies of those editorials as well as additional letters of support from neighbors on 31st, 32nd, and Q Streets, letters of support from the Georgetown Garden Club, Charles Atherton of the Commission of Fine Arts, and Mount Vernon.

The Advisory Neighborhood Commission voted unanimously to support our application for a special exception. In fact, one commissioner who had attended our meeting with neighbors to review the conditions, expressed dismay when he noted that several of those opposing the application before the ANC had been at our meeting. The commissioner noted how responsive Tudor Place staff was to the recommendations and suggestions of neighbors and questioned why the opposition did not speak up then.

I am aware that those opposing the special exception distributed a very misleading letter and petition. The letter and petition opened with statements supporting Tudor Place and then went on to say we were violating the wishes of the last owner which we are not, and asked signers to oppose disruptive uses which we are not proposing. Three neighbors who received the letter and petition and who had also attended the Tudor Place meeting wrote to us. I'd like to quote two letters: " I attended the November meeting you called to gain additional neighborly input for the pending BZA application. We all spent hours examining the provisions, clarifying language and agreeing to such neighbors' suggestions as the appointment of a Liaison committee and the dissemination of a calendar of events. So we were certainly surprised when we received a letter from the so-called "Friends and Neighbors of Tudor Place" that included persons who had also

attended that meeting and nevertheless misrepresented what had transpired there." Another wrote the Friends and Neighbors letter signers stating "Your letter is a wicked interpretation of a meeting I attended at Tudor Place about its application for a BZA special exception. Tudor Place made every accommodation to its neighbors, often to the detriment of its mission and survival. The range of programming by Tudor clearly shows this institution is more than a mere "period house." The restrictions that Tudor has placed upon itself for its meeting and fundraising are more reasonable than any other arts institution in the area." Other people who signed the "Friends and Neighbors letter" such as Julia Pardoe, Sheila and Edwin Weidenfeld, Frances Wilkinson, Tia Cudahy all said we could use their names noting that they are in favor of our application and felt mislead by the letter.

I believe our presentation more than satisfies the Burden of Proof under Sections 3104 and 217 of the Zoning Regulations. Tudor Place will continue to dedicate itself to preservation and to providing educational services to the community and the nation. As two neighbors noted in their letter of support: "Tudor Place is not only a national treasure; it is a Georgetown and neighborhood asset of immeasurable proportion. Its physical beauty graces our daily lives; it is a privilege to live in such proximity to such historic events. On balance, its acres of gardens and sporadic events surely make the neighborhood LESS congested, not more." Thank you.

TUDOR PLACE

HISTORIC HOUSE AND GARDEN

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO:	Beverley Bailey
FAX #:	727-6072
FROM:	Leslie Buhler
DATE:	April 16, 2003

TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 4

MESSAGE

Dear Ms. Bailey:

Attached is the verbal presentation I made yesterday at the hearing for Tudor Place, No. 16974.

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