BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Statement of The Reverend Richard E. Downing
Representing
ST. JAMES' PARISH
222 8th St. NE, Washington, DC
Case No. 17043
November 4, 2003

My name is Richard E. Downing. I serve as the rector of St. James' Parish, the only other property owner on the square occupied by St. James' Church, Rectory and the MedLink Building and parking lot. Our parish bounds include the area between North Capitol and 15th Streets and East Capitol and H Streets. I wish to speak in support of appeal #17043 lodged by the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association.

I would like to begin by saying that we do not wish to be unreasonable. Rather we simply want to stand up for what we perceive to be the rights of not only the people of our neighborhood but those of the people of the District of Columbia.

The concerns addressed in appeal #17043 outline a history of difficulties imposed on our neighborhood due to 1. Capitol Hill Health Care Group's (CHG) consistent defiance of the Board of Zoning Adjustment's (BZA) order #16407 and 2. Their recent motion to reduce the number of off street parking spaces required by that 1999 order.

Compounding the difficulties experienced the neighborhood due to CHG's failure to comply with the BZA's original order requiring that a specific and limited staff - patient bed - off street parking space ratio be maintained, and that the CHG properties remain free of trash, is the fact that we knew nothing of their recent request for a change in the parking requirements. We learned of it only after it was effected and parking became more difficult.

I say this simply to remind us all that so much of the history of the troubled relationship between the CHG and its neighbors stems from their unwillingness to engage with interested neighbors about proposals or problems. The BZA required the CHG to meet quarterly with ANC's and other concerned neighbors to try and alleviate some of these types of issues before they became contentious. This is yet another point of the order with which CHG has failed to comply.

In addition, it is quite curious to me that of the 276 original off-street parking spaces CHG was required to provide, 100 of those places have been sold in the past 2 years and were developed into relatively large, not terribly attractive townhouses. Furthermore, it was my understanding that at that same time, CHG entered into a contract with the Holliday Development Corporation to sell all of the properties formerly associated with the Capitol Hill Hospital on our block (a move that incidentally had many positive implications for our neighborhood.)

However, that the contract as since been renounced by CHG begs three questions: 1. How seriously do they take their binding agreements? 2. What are their development plans for the future? and 3. Will our neighborhood, and St. James' in particular, have a voice in those plans?

History has made it quite apparent that we have no reason to trust the CHG has the best interest or any interest of this neighborhood in mind. I am here to ask the BZA to prove to the people of our neighborhood and the District of Columbia that our elected and appointed officials are capable of and serious about enforcing the laws and regulations of our city's government for the protection of our citizens, and ask you to enforce your order #16407. Thank you for your time and your willingness to serve the people of DC.

BZA
Case No. 17043
Exhibit No. 106

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17043
EXHIBIT NO. 106