1213 E Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

July 2, 2003

Geoffrey Griffis, Chairperson of Zoning
Office of Zoning, District of Columbia Government
441 4th Street, N.W.
Suite 210-S
Washington, D.C. 20010
RE: Application No.17045

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Dear Mr. Griffis:

My neighbors Reverend and Mrs. Neavelle Coles have asked me to write this letter on their behalf. My concern is the preservation of the carriage house at their address, 1215 E Street, N.E. I live next door. It has been my understanding that the carriage house is now threatened with extinction because the Coles have chosen to add space to the main house, thereby reducing the area of the backyard to slightly smaller than the size required by District of Columbia housing codes.

First of all, I will say that I appreciate their situation and I hope that by writing this letter of support that the carriage house would be spared for the personal of use of its new owners as well as the posterity and benefit to the neighborhood. The latter is a point that requires some clarification.

As a long time resident of E Street, I recall a time when the block boasted not one but three carriage houses. One was lost in the early eighties when a neighbor decided to tear down his carriage house to make more room for a patio. While it was his prerogative, no one who may have taken offense, knew of his plans and it is questionable if it would have made a difference in the outcome. However, I was disturbed when I saw the demolition crew at work. I felt many things but I consoled myself with the fact that the community had two left.

The second and most recent loss of the largest carriage house (1211) occurred less than a decade ago. It was struck by a truck-- which I believe was a city vehicle. The mishap took place while the D.C. water and sewerage department was making a number of repairs to a line in the alley. Numerous city vehicles used the alley at that time. Meanwhile, the impact of the truck was so severe that it dislodged the building's left rear wall, rendering it structurally unsound. Little time was wasted condemning the property yet no one stepped forward to admit blame.

The previous owners were disappointed but they did not have the means to make the necessary repairs, thus they were forced to demolish the building. Disheartened I saved a few of the bricks but the loss was larger than it appeared.

BZA
Case No. 17045
Exhibit No. 24

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17045
EXHIBIT NO. 24

The remaining carriage house, of 1215 E Street, also provides a benefit to its immediate neighbors--those on both sides of the property. The high wall of the structure provides my own property with a strong, attractive and sturdy divider. The Coles, however, are interested in keeping the carriage house for practical considerations--a garage is planned.

Finally, I believe that the hoopla over the carriage house has not been about the carriage but about the addition. Certainly is not an architectural gem but it is not unattractive. It does cause me to lose a little light in my south windows and privacy is not what it used to be but I can live with that. I can understand that the Coles having come from the suburbs, where they lived for many years, are like a number of the recent arrivals to the community. They have had a different life and an aesthetic, one which includes larger homes with sprawling lawns. What to do with years of accumulated personal property may have influenced their decision to add the extra rooms. In of these changes, I believe that the Coles want to preserve some of the neighborhood's history. They also have demonstrated the good intentions to work with those in the community who may have an opinion different from their own and they have displayed respect for the rights of others. In years to come, future owners of 1215 may wish to revert to the original architectural plan. The carriage house, once torn down, cannot be replaced.

I ask that you reconsider not only on the behalf of the Coles but also on the behalf of the entire neighborhood which needs a rallying point. I believe that the salvation of the carriage house would benefit the community in at least three ways: it could serve as a testimony of historic preservation, a neighborhood unification point, and evidence of good civic responsibility.

Sincerely,

Teresia Bush