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May 10, 2004

Mr. Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, N.W. – Suite 210S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Opposition to Application No. 17055

Dear Mr. Griffis:

We are writing in connection with Knollwood's application for a variance to construct an addition to its Oregon Avenue, N.W. facility. We are aware that the application has been withdrawn for mediation, but we wish our views to be made a part of the permanent record in the event that the interested parties are not able to reach an agreement. For the reasons stated below, we oppose any further expansion of the footprint of the existing development. Furthermore, we respectfully request that Knollwood be required to fulfill commitments it made to the neighborhood to shield the 1990 addition from abutting properties.

We have owned our home at 6274 29th Street since October 1980. Before we brought our home on 29th Street, we rented a home only a few blocks away, at 6622 31st Street. We relocated to this neighborhood from out-of-state because of its special character and the appeal of living in a neighborhood with mature trees close to downtown and Rock Creek Park. Over the years, however, we have witnessed the negative impact of the past development of the Knollwood property on the streetscape, tree cover, and special character of this neighborhood. Indeed, it is surprising that Knollwood is requesting further concessions from the neighborhood when it has not abided by commitments made in connection with the 1990 expansion – in particular the commitment to use landscaping to shield the properties abutting the 1990 addition. The promised buffer was used in connection with an effort to convince the neighborhood not to oppose the 1990 expansion. **That addition dramatically altered the streetscape, particularly on the Nebraska Avenue side.** Instead of the promised buffer, Knollwood planted a few, widely-spaced, poorly developed trees and shrubs which, even as mature plants, do not and cannot form a buffer between the 1990 addition and nearby residences.

Wholly apart from the issue of Knollwood's failure to fulfill earlier commitments, we believe it is important to the future of a vital District of Columbia that the Board enforce the 25-year moratorium. The District of Columbia will continue to lose residents to the suburbs if there is the sense that property tax paying citizens cannot rely on the integrity of the system.

We oppose Knollwood's proposal for several additional reasons:

1. Knollwood's planned extension at the corner of its lot would seriously undermine the privacy of all families living on 29th Street and Stephenson Lane. Such a tall building coming within approximately 70 feet of some of our neighbors' property lines will allow views straight into their windows and down into their rear yards. Moreover, the construction disturbance will come within 40 or 50 feet of their lot lines, impinging even more on their peace and privacy during the period of construction.

2. Knollwood's expansion plan would cause extensive environmental damage and significantly alter the special

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17055
EXHIBIT NO. 118

character of the neighborhood that was a key consideration in the decision of many families with children to move to the area, which strongly supports our local public school, both financially and by supplementing public resources with volunteer labor.

3. Knollwood's plans to build an exit from its parking lot onto residential Tennyson Street, right in front of some family homes with young children, will present a safety hazard, particularly for elderly drivers. Indeed, the bottom of Tennyson Street is low lying and frequently is difficult to traverse by auto after a winter storm due to icy conditions. During the 24 years we have lived on 29th Street, we have observed cars skidding and spinning at this point on Tennyson. It would appear that Knollwood has not studied these conditions. Moreover, a right turn from Tennyson onto Oregon Avenue is far more difficult than the current right turn from Knollwood's driveway onto Oregon. Due to placement of the crest of the hill on Oregon and the limited opportunity for observing cars approaching from the left, a right turn onto Oregon from Tennyson is far more difficult to maneuver than the existing turn from Knollwood's driveway.

We urge you to disapprove Knollwood's application when it comes before the BZA.

Sincerely,

Leslie Rice Melman

Stephen J. Melman

Katharine R. Melman

cc: Chevy Chase ANC 3/4G