Stanton Park Neighborhood Association
P.O. Box 75085, National Capitol Station, Washington, D.C. 20013-5085

D.C. Board of Zoning
2003 SEP 10 PM 3:58

September 9, 2003

Ms. Sherri Pruitt, Director
DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth St., NW, Suite 210 S
Washington, DC 20001

Re: BZA Case No. 17068
622 A Street, NE

Dear Ms. Pruitt,

The Land Use Committee of the Stanton park neighborhood Association met on September 8, 2003 and reviewed the status of the proposed project. We had reviewed this project previously when it was before the Historic Preservation Review Board. At that time we were unable to determine the lot coverage, but have since been informed that it is marginally above that allowed as a matter of right. We have no objection to the proposed lot coverage. A copy of our letter to the HPRB dated December 12, 2002 is attached. You will note in our final paragraph that our primary concern is with the proposed excavation and underpinning of a side wall adjacent to an alley. We believe this type of construction can cause very serious structural problems if not properly engineered.

Thank you,

Drury Tallant

Drury Tallant, Co-Chair
SPNA Land Use Committee

BZA
Case No. 17068
Exhibit No. 23

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17068
EXHIBIT NO. 23

Stanton Park Neighborhood Association
P.O. Box 75085, National Capitol Station, Washington, D.C. 20013-5085

December 12, 2002

Mr. Tersh Boasberg, Chair
Historic Preservation Review Board
c/o Ms. Emily Paulus
801 North Capitol St., NE
Washington, DC 20002

Re: HPA No. 03-096
622 A Street, NE

Dear Mr. Boasberg,

The Land Use Committee of the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association met on December 9, 2002 and reviewed the proposed renovations and alterations to 622 A St., NE. In general the Committee has no objections the proposed design, and commends the owner for the overall design intent. We do have some minor design concerns, and one significant structural concern. Our design concerns are as follows:

a) We were unable to determine the proposed lot coverage because no site plan or plot plan was provided. The project appears to be under the maximum lot coverage, but we were unable to verify that fact.

b) The existing windows on the alley are depicted as 6 over 6, while the new windows in the addition are shown as 2 over 2. We recommend the use of the 2 over 2 windows, and hope the owner will investigate the advisability of replacing the existing windows with more appropriate profiles at this time. Certainly the new windows and doors should reflect historically appropriate types rather than perpetuate an inconsistent pattern. The basement windows are too short to be double hung, and should not be allowed to swing out into the alley. We feel the only type of window that could work in this case is an inward-opening hopper window.

c) The proposed areaway and steps at the front of the residence appear to be required only for periodic access to the utility meters. We question whether this design is appropriate to accomplish that goal.

d) The basement door/transom window arrangement in the rear elevation appears somewhat clumsy. Although this area will essentially be visible only

from within the rear yard, we suggest that additional design attention be paid to this area.

e) The new cornice and belt course in the rear addition appears intended to reflect the design of the principal front facade. While attractive, we question whether a simpler design might not be more appropriate for a rear elevation.

Our structural concern is perhaps not an immediate concern of the Historic Preservation Review Board, but we feel that it does pose the possibility of a significant impact on the stability of this residence and perhaps some design implications. Our concern is with the proposed underpinning when this activity is adjacent to an alley. The front half of the structure appears to require an excavation of about 2.5 feet, and the rear half an excavation of some 6 feet. In most cases unreinforced foundation walls are required to act only to resist the vertical weight of the structure. However, when these walls abutt an alley, they also function as retaining walls. I am aware of a similar situation in the 700 block of Sixth St., NE where inadequate engineering caused the alley to slowly collapse into the basement over a period of several years. Ultimately, that structure will either be demolished, the basement filled back in, or require a very expensive simultaneous reconstruction of both the basement foundation wall and the alley. In that case, the owner has blamed the District for failure to maintain the alley, and the District has blamed the property owner for failure to maintain a proper foundation. I hope that by alerting the owners and the HPD staff to this potential problem that they can work together to achieve an engineered solution which prevents a similar situation at 622 A Street.

Sincerely,

Drury Tallant
Co-Chair, SPNA Land Use Committee