June 1, 2004

District of Columbia
Office of Zoning
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210 South
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Special Exception Application for 1519 P St NW
BZA Application No. 17172

Dear Board of Zoning Adjustment:

We are writing to express our concerns with the above-referenced request for special exception, which is on the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) agenda for June 9, 2004 and scheduled for a hearing before the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) on June 22, 2004. We live at 1521 P St NW, next door and immediately to the west of the property seeking the special exception. We have filed an application for party status in the BZA hearing, and we have a several concerns with respect to the proposed addition that we hope can be addressed as the application process moves forward.

**The Proposed Addition/Request for Special Exception**

The property at 1519 is a free-standing, detached brick building which we believe to be approximately 900 square feet that is set-back substantially from the front sidewalk compared to other properties on the block. It currently has a small, single story wood-frame addition to the rear that is not visible from the front of the building. There is a very large tree behind this wood-frame addition, and a smaller tree between 1519 and 1517 P to the east.

It is our understanding that the applicants propose to add approximately 400-500 more square feet to the property, an increase of approximately 50 percent, by building out several feet to the east and building back several feet toward the alley. The expansion includes the demolition the current single story wood-frame addition, and the building of a two-story addition that expands to the rear and east side of the house. This expansion includes the destruction of both the large tree to the rear of the house and the smaller tree to the east.

It is our understanding that the application requires a variance from District of Columbia regulations regarding side yards and open courts.

**Substantial Adverse Affect**

We are concerned that the action requested will have a substantially adverse affect on the use and enjoyment of our property at 1521 P St NW. In this regard, it is imperative to understand the proposed addition in the context of adjacent properties and surrounding neighborhood, including light, air, open and green space, and historic properties. Moreover, we believe that the March 29,

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2004 submission to the BZA by Mr. Stephen duPont, the architect for the applicants, contains a number of errors and misleading statements about these issues.

Our property is a semi-detached, single-family stucco covered wood-frame home that was constructed circa 1870 and renovated by Abdo Development in 1997. Although the property lines abut, there are approximately 7 feet between the rear portion of our house and the west wall of the house at 1519 P St. This 7 foot wide area is part of our rear and side deck and garden.

The submission by Mr. duPont erroneously states that there are only 1.5 feet between our property and the property at 1519 P St. This mischaracterization appears intended to support Mr. duPont's assertion that the property at 1519 is a single family home by "accident". To be sure, the front portion of our house is 2-3 feet from the property line at 1519 P St. However, as noted above, the property at 1519 P St is substantially set back from the sidewalk, and the rear portion of our house is narrower than the front portion, which creates this 7-foot side deck and garden area between our house and the west wall of 1519 P St.

This rear and side deck area is visible from several rooms of our house, on both the first and second floors. The large tree behind 1519 P St. provides canopy and green space over this rear and side deck area. Moreover, the fence surrounding our deck currently blocks the view of most of the current, single story addition to 1519 P St. From our side and rear deck area, then, we experience the canopy of a large tree and open space below the tree (and we view the canopy and open space from inside our house as well). The proposed addition will destroy this green and open space, replacing it with a two-story brickwall.

This is in notable contrast to the characterization of Mr. duPont, whose submission ignores this impact on the use and enjoyment of our property. Rather, Mr. duPont would have the BZA and ANC believe that there is essentially no impact on our property because only our parking area abuts the rear portion of the property at 1519 where the addition will be constructed. In fact, the project will destroy open and green space and substantially adversely affect the light and air surrounding the back of our property. Moreover, if the proposed addition includes windows on the west wall of the addition, the privacy provided by our rear deck and garden will be eliminated entirely.

**Historic Characteristics**

We are very concerned that the proposed addition is not consistent with the historic characteristics of the property at 1519 and the surrounding neighborhood. The proposed expansion to the east will be visible from the front sidewalk, for example. Moreover, we are concerned that the architectural style and proposed design and materials of the proposed addition are not consistent with the historic architecture of 1519 P St and the surrounding property.

In addition, we believe that the open and green space that currently exist as a result of the construction of 1519 as a free-standing single family home are properly understood as part of its historic significance. In this regard, the proposed expansion of the property to the east and the rear, coupled with the destruction of two trees, will substantially alter the historically significant green and open space provided by 1519 P St, to the detriment of the neighborhood and adjacent properties.

Finally, we understand that DC zoning regulations are inconsistent regarding whether a side yard is required. Given the historic nature of 1519 P as a free-standing house that currently provides,

and historically has provided, open and green space to the community, we believe that the ANC and BZA should apply the side yard requirement to 1519 P St.

**Conclusion**

We understand the applicant's concerns with the current single-story rear addition to the property at 1519 P St, and we stand ready to engage in a constructive discussion about solutions that meet the applicant's needs without substantially adversely affecting our rights and interests.

As currently planned, however, our use and enjoyment of our property at 1521 P St. will substantially adversely affected as a result of fundamental, negative changes on the light, air, open and green space available to our property. Moreover, the entire neighborhood will be adversely affected by the loss of the substantial greenery provided by the large tree in back of the property, which is visible from Church Street without obstruction, and by the expansion of the property to the east, which will be visible from P St.

We appreciate the opportunity to present our concerns to the ANC, and we hope you are able to take our concerns into account as you evaluate the application for a special exception. We invite you to visit our home at your convenience so that you may witness first-hand the concerns we have.

Sincerely,

Rachel Jacobson

Eric Olsen

**Owners of 1521 P St NW**
**202-387-0252**