Board of Zoning Adjustment Application 17323
Testimony of Nathan W. Gross, AICP
Residential Recreation Space – Policy Context
May 24, 2005

My testimony will relate to the variance from the residential recreation space requirements. Specifically, I will summarize some mitigating policy factors supporting approval of the variance from the amount of residential recreation space required.

As Board members are aware, the Office of Planning ("OP") in cooperation with other agencies and a task force of private sector professionals is reviewing the residential recreation space standards for potential revisions.

Zoning Commission Case No. 05-02 has now been set down for public hearing. Several aspects of that case are relevant to the instant variance request for 2105 10th Street, N.W.

In the Task Force summary prepared by OP it is noted that small lots have particular difficulties in complying because the building's core factor uses up a significant proportion of the total roof space. In Case 17323 today, we have a small lot and also have the sloping roof of the historic church, which cannot be used for recreation space. This effectively makes the lot and roof area even smaller.

OP and others have also noted that, in neighborhoods such as Downtown and 14th and U Streets, the availability of active entertainment and arts uses nearby may effectively substitute for recreation space on-site at the apartment house. The City wants apartment residents to support these uses, and therefore on-site requirements can reasonably be lowered. In this case, the historic U Street corridor is just one block away and is re-emerging as a retail, arts and entertainment corridor. It provides and will increasingly provide recreational and cultural opportunities for residents of the proposed condominium in this case.

The OP summary also noted that in Washington, D.C., building heights and densities are significantly less than in many cities, making on-site recreation space in apartment buildings less of an urgent need.

The Zoning Commission agreed to set down a minimum dimension for residential recreation space of eight feet (8') rather than the twenty-five feet

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(25') currently required. It was noted that, again, small lots especially may have difficulties complying with the 25-foot requirement.

The Zoning Commission also set down for consideration in Case 05-02 the option of allowing private balconies to count towards the recreation space requirement. OP mentioned the alternative of excluding from the calculation any apartment having a balcony. In our case today, the building balconies for a total of ten units and has private roof decks as well.