Statement of Cynthia Giordano
Z.C. Case No. 00-27M: Zoning Map Amendment
Testimony on behalf of 1121 24th Street, Limited Partnership (the "Partnership"), the Owner of 1121 24th Street, N.W., Lot 831 in Square 37. (the "Tiverton")

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Madam Chair and Zoning Commission Members,

We submit this testimony as proponents of the petitioner's application for approval of a Zoning Map Amendment for re-zoning the Tiverton and surrounding properties from the present R-5-B classification to R-5-E (the "Amendment").

The petition was filed so that the Zoning Commission could reconcile the current R-5-B zoning applied to the southern portion of Square 37 to the Comprehensive Plan and associated Generalized Land Use Map's requirements that the area provide for a mixture of high-density residential uses and medium-density commercial uses. We support this goal and believe it can best be met by changing the R-5-B classification of the Tiverton to R-5-E.

The Tiverton is a four (4) story, forty-six (46) unit apartment building constructed in 1925. The building faces obsolescence due to its lack of elevators, central air or adequate parking (only 2 spaces are provided), or amenities. The Tiverton currently has an FAR that is near or exceeding that allowed under the R-5-D classification proposed by the District of Columbia Office of Planning ("OP").

II. ARGUMENT

To avoid redundancy, this testimony will not re-state the petitioners argument that R-5-E and not R-5-D better meets the Comprehensive Plan's requirement for high-density residential use, although we agree with that conclusion. Instead, this testimony will focus on the Tiverton and the appropriateness of R-5-E zoning for this property.

1. The current R-5-B and proposed R-5-D zoning classifications provide no economic incentive to renovate and update the Tiverton.

2. Although this lack of economic incentive is supported by the Tiverton tenants and the Office of Planning as a means for preserving affordable housing on the subject property, the Tiverton tenant population is largely transitory and student-based and the building does not provide a significant amount of affordable housing for permanent residents.

3. The affordable housing needs in the community are relevant but should be addressed in the redevelopment of the entire southern portion of Square 37

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and not in the re-zoning of the Tiverton lot alone.

A. Economic Incentives for Renovation

There are no economic incentives or income streams available to accomplish renovation of the Tiverton under the current R-5-B or proposed R-5-D zoning classifications. The Tiverton is currently grandfathered under the existing, low-density zone R-5-B zone and the building's FAR already approaches or exceeds that allowed under R-5-D. The 80-year old building is obsolete by today's current market standards. A four-story walk-up with no central air, limited parking and few amenities, it is not the type of housing which the City should be seeking to preserve as a policy. Rather , the City should be endeavoring to ensure that all housing options in the City include modern conveniences. The Tiverton will not be able to add those conveniences without the ability to either utilize or transfer development rights that would be created under an R-5-E zoning classification. Without this classification, the Tiverton is consigned to eventual obsolescence.

B. Tiverton's Transitory Population

The Tiverton has a high percentage of students among its tenant population and the building experiences a high rate of annual turnover. Although there are a few long-term tenants (approximately 9), approximately 33% of the building's units are re-leased each year. In the past three and a half years tenants we have had the following levels of turnover:

YEAR	APARTMENT TURNOVER
2001	**18 Apartments**
2002	**11 Apartments**
2003	**19 Apartments**
2004 (through May 9th)	**9 Apartments**

Because students constitute one of the largest groups in the tenant population the description of Tiverton as "affordable housing" should be understood in the proper context.

C. Affordable Housing in the Neighborhood

This testimony could not and does not dispute the need for affordable housing in

the Foggy Bottom neighborhood or ANC-2A. However, it is self-defeating to believe that the only means of providing or maintaining affordable housing is to freeze the development of the Tiverton to a 1920's era apartment building. The District of Columbia has numerous incentives for the development of affordable housing and owns two properties in Square 37 that may be redeveloped in the future. Given the District's interest in developing affordable housing there is no reason to believe that it will fail to provide incentives and development restrictions that will result in provision of new, modern affordable housing units for Foggy Bottom and District residents. It is inequitable for the Tiverton to be singled out as the "affordable housing" lot within a high-density residential area. An understandable desire to preserve affordable housing should not stifle the upgrading of the City's housing stock by discouraging the renovation and/or redevelopment of obsolete buildings in prime downtown locations.

III. CONCLUSION

The rezoning of the entire southern portion of Square 37 to R-5-E is more consistent with the Comprehensive Plan as well as sound zoning and planning practice which seeks logical and easily comprehensible zoning patterns as opposed to micro zoning and split-zoning patterns within individual squares and blocks of property. Singling out the Tiverton and two other small private property owners in the Square for lower density zoning is an inequitable and an inherently wrong way of treating these small property owners who have maintained moderate-income housing options in the West End for so many years.