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August 19, 2002

Carol J. Mitten, Chair
Zoning Commission
District of Columbia Office of Zoning
Suite 210-S
441 Fourth Street NW
Washington D.C. 20001

Re: Case No. 02-17

Dear Chair Mitten:

I write regarding Zoning Commission Case No. 02-17 at 5401 Western Avenue, N.W., the proposal by Stonebridge Associates, Inc., for the site of the Washington Clinic and a portion of the Lisner Home property. On behalf of the neighbors I represent, I recommend against the proposed "up-zoning" of the property that would permit construction of 200 or more rental apartments.

For several years now, representatives of the District Government's Executive Branch and I have spoken against the excesses in development planned for the Maryland side of the border in Friendship Heights. In testimony presented to the Montgomery County Council on July 8, 1998, I stated: "The Friendship Heights community works today. It is a cross-jurisdictional, mixed-use, neighborhood of individuals and families, businesses and shops. It is a successful neighborhood centered on a Metro stop that has been the only subway stop in Montgomery County that has seen growth in ridership in recent years."

My testimony emphasized the concerns of "maintaining balance between residential and commercial development; traffic; and the lack, to date, of significant inter-jurisdictional planning." I reminded the Montgomery County officials that the District's Comprehensive Land Use Plans for Ward 3 encourages owner-occupied housing near Metrorail stations, including Friendship Heights. "My constituents are very concerned about preserving the residential character of the neighborhoods surrounding Friendship Heights," I said. "Another concern is that development have minimal impact on low-density and moderate-density housing that is directly adjacent to commercial enterprises."

I mention this background because it is a longstanding concern that the residential character of the Friendship Heights neighborhood in the District be preserved. One

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concern I have with regard to the planned development is that it conflicts with the District government's positions previously stated in the course of the Maryland development debates with regard to the scope and density of developments, and impact on traffic.

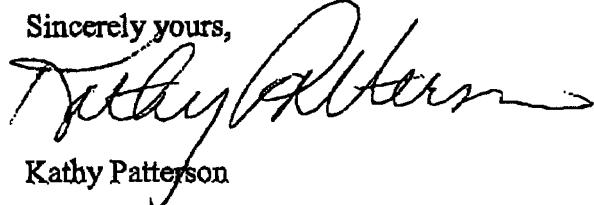
As the neighborhood residents organized into the Friendship Heights Organization for Reasonable Development (FhORD) have noted in previous correspondence, the proposed development is roughly twice the height and three times the density permitted under current zoning. The current zoning provides the appropriate "buffer" between strictly commercial enterprises and the single-family residential neighborhood along Military Road, to the east and to the south.

I concur with the desirability of housing adjacent to the Friendship Heights Metrorail station, and am pleased to note that neighbors have been very forthcoming in proposing alternatives to the Stonebridge proposal that would be consistent with current zoning, such as the townhome development at Courts of Chevy Chase, and the Villages of Bethesda, also townhomes near the Bethesda Metro station. I commend my constituents for their constructive research and suggestions.

One of the strong arguments in favor of additional housing at Friendship Heights is the tax benefit to the District as a whole from real property and income taxes. At the same time, a recent analysis by economist Marilyn Simon makes a very strong case that a townhome development permitted as a matter of right today could have better economic impact for the District than the much larger proposal put forward by Stonebridge Associates. I recommend your review of this analysis.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Kathy Patterson

cc: Members, ANC 3E
Andrew Altman, Director of Planning
Friendship Heights Organization for Reasonable Development
Douglas M. Firstenberg, Stonebridge Associates, Inc.

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TO: Carol Mitten

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FROM: Kathy Patterson

REMARKS: _____

TOTAL PAGES (including cover page): 3

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