COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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Councilmember-Ward 6

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Ms. Carol Mitten, Chairman
DC Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Case Number 02-38

Dear Chairman Mitten,

I am testifying this evening in support of the Planned Unit Development for Waterside Mall which is before you as Case # 02-38.

This PUD application has been the subject of discussion at numerous community meetings. Those meetings are detailed in an addendum to the Office of Planning recommendations. In the course of these meetings a number of issues were consistently raised. Prominent among them were questions including whether the re-opening of 4th Street would be beneficial; whether the proposed buildings along M Street would interfere with views and create a congested massing across the street from low residential townhouses; whether new residential units would be built on the site in a timely manner; whether the retail proposed would be less than what is currently available; and whether the existing shops could be maintained during the early phases of construction.

I concur fully with the recommendations of the Office of Planning which speak to most of the issues I've mentioned and make solid proposals for ensuring both compliance and a modicum of flexibility for the developers. I commend the Office of Planning report and will work with them to make it more widely available to the community.

The issue of re-opening 4th Street, reconstructing the L'Enfant Street grid, is in my view, critical to the success of retail uses along its length as well as on M Street and beyond to what are planned retail uses along the waterfront. Just as importantly, the reopening of the street allows a joining of the residential and institutional community uses north of I Street with that part of the SW community south of M Street. The new community connection should be further enhanced by the Town Center Plaza to be created around the Metro stop, as well as the continued maintenance by the developer of the park just north of the site.

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The developer has been responsive to community concerns in respect to the width of the sidewalks along 4th Street and M Street. In addition, the developer has indicated a willingness to do step-backs of the buildings along M Street in order to further mitigate the impact of the "towers" on the residents south of M Street. I also request that the Zoning Order reflect the Office of Planning recommendations which would make the sidewalk widths and building step-backs a requirement.

The PUD as proposed suggests a certain timetable for new residential construction and the Office of Planning recommendation suggests a more aggressive development plan. I concur with the Office of Planning recommendation.

The PUD proposes increasing retail uses substantially. I have had many conversations with the developers and with other property owners in the area in an effort to find a way to retain most of the small retail shops that currently exist. I have been unable to find a place for them to move. The developers have made a commitment to retain the grocery store, the pharmacy and the bank during construction. I am beginning talks with WMATA about an extension down M Street, SW of the current route of a "circulator" bus that brings Navy Yard and other workers along M Street, SE up to Eastern Market and Union Station.

As the Commission knows, the developer could do a "Matter of Right" project that would provide few of the amenities and present a massing that would, in my view, be more visually overwhelming than that presented in the proposed PUD. Under the circumstances, the developers have made substantive efforts to meet with and respond to the community. With the additional strictures recommended by the Office of Planning, this first-stage PUD can be a catalyst for the development of new small businesses and jobs.

With the exit of the Environmental Protection Agency from the site there is very little commercial activity. A large empty building is an invitation to crime. The sooner development can begin on the site, the better for this SW community.

I ask that you make your decision on Case Number 02-38 as expeditiously as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Sincerely yours,

Sharon Ambrose

Sharon Ambrose
Councilmember – Ward 6