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October 28, 2004

Carol Mitten, Chair
D.C. Zoning Commission
441 – 4th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: ZC Case No. 03-27, 4600 Brandywine Associates

Dear Chairman Mitten and Zoning Commissioners:

Please accept these comments on the materials submitted by the applicant on October 21, 2004, showing an alternative design for the retail entrance, a revised roof and terrace plan, and revised landscape plan.

1. Retail Entrance

The applicant has reoriented the entry to face Wisconsin Avenue and has pulled back the landscaping beds so that they no longer cover the entrance (Plan S4). In place of the landscaping beds, however, the applicant proposes steps and what appears to be a low wall. The steps and wall would continue to separate this property from the street rather than joining the two together. They would be an obstruction and possible tripping hazard to pedestrians on what is the second busiest intersection in Tenleytown. Nor do the steps seem necessary, despite the slope of the property. As can be seen in photographs of the existing east elevation (Plan S2 in the July 2003 Application, May 2004 Revision, and June 2004 Prehearing Statement; Plan E2 in the August 19, 2004 Updated Plans), the existing building is fronted by a wide, paved plaza without steps or obstruction, a reminder that Babe's used to be a movie theater. This plaza allows pedestrians freedom to move down the street and to turn the corner easily.

A more pedestrian-friendly approach would be to replace the steps and wall with a continuous paved surface between the retail entrance and street, as currently exists. Different types, colors, or shapes of pavers could be used to give interest to the entrance. Any drainage issue could be treated with French drains, as has been done at the Container Store, one-half block to the south, which has a much more pronounced slope to its entrance, but uses ramps instead of steps. To integrate the Brandywine Street and Wisconsin Avenue frontages better, the eastern-most end of the planter bed along Brandywine Street should be rounded like the serpentine wall on

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EXHIBIT NO.51

Wisconsin Avenue. When viewed from the corner, this will give a unified presentation. It will also allow pedestrians greater ease of movement when rounding the corner.

2. Roof and Terrace Plan

The revision shows a lowered, 4-foot parapet wall around rooftop terraces. This will make the building appear closer to its 65-foot "height". During discussions with the applicant, residents stated they would accept a height of 65 feet, but were uncomfortable with heights greater than that.

3. Landscape Plan

The revision shows crape myrtles in place of the purple plums in public space, as well as on the side terrace instead of red oaks. (Plan S2) Crape myrtles do seem to be growing well along Wisconsin Avenue in Tenleytown. The only caveat is that if any of the planter beds is used for a rain garden, as recommended by ANC 3F Resolution 04-27, another species that is more tolerant of wet conditions should be chosen.

Red oaks are still shown in the treeboxes, despite a notice on the Urban Forestry Administration's web site that these are not being planted now because of blight. Flexibility should be given to allow UFA to determine what trees to plant when the time comes.

Plan S3 continues to show a treebox width of 5'6" and sidewalk width ranging from 5'10" to 9'8". The attached copy of the street width map from the Public Space Committee shows a minimum of six feet for both the treebox and sidewalk.

The steps to the affordable unit effectively cross in front of the garden café for the Murasaki Restaurant and in fact may come close to a planter bed in front of the restaurant. A better treatment would be to orient the steps parallel to the property line to avoid confusion for Murasaki patrons and others trying to access the stores on the terrace next to it.

4. Retail Space and Affordable Housing

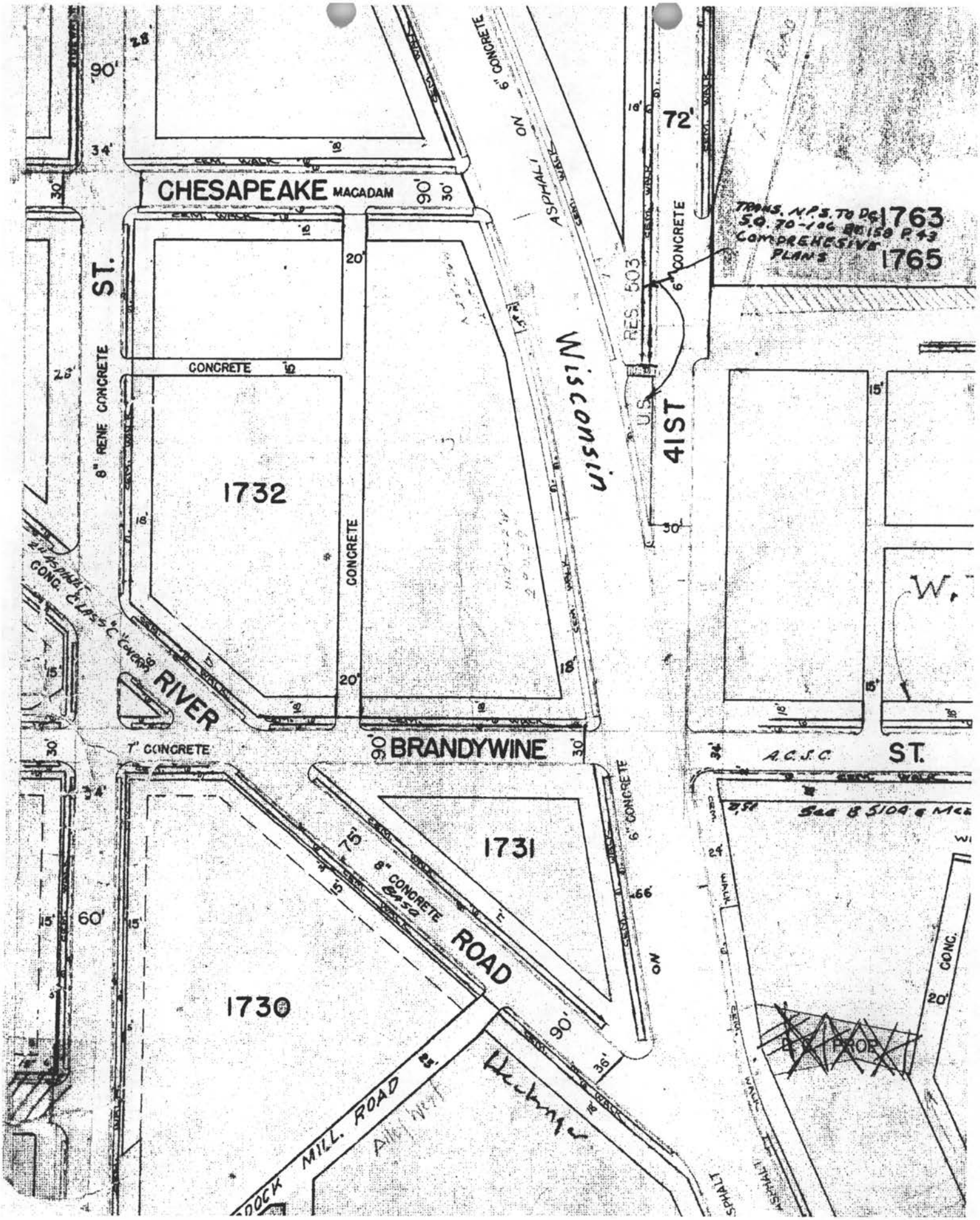
Unfortunately, the drawings do not show an entrance to a second retail space on Wisconsin Avenue, as recommended by ANC 3F Resolution 04-27. If you decide not to require additional retail space and if you decide that the affordable unit should remain where it is proposed, you should also consider what additional space should be allocated for affordable housing to make this a more meaningful project benefit.

Sincerely,

Cathy Wiss

Cathy Wiss
Commissioner, ANC 3F06

One attachment


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1763
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