H Street Main Street, Inc.
P.O. Box 75041
Washington D.C. 20013-0041

Government of the District of Columbia
Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, N.W. - Suite 220-S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: CASE NO. 04-22 (ABDO DEVELOPMENT, LLC - 220 H Street, N.E.)

Dear Commissioners:

H Street Main Street (HSMS) expresses its support for the application from Abdo Development, LLC ("Abdo") for the proposed development of subject property, 220 H Street, N.E. (Square 751, Lot 13), former site of the National Capital Children's Museum ("Site").

I. Preliminary Statement

HSMS tenders these comments pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3022.3 of the Zoning Commission Rules of Practice and Procedure.

II. Description of HSMS

HSMS is a neighborhood-based community revitalization organization recognized by the ReStoreDC program. Created in 2002, initial activities included securing nonprofit tax status and developing the volunteer-based committees necessary to execute the Main Street Approach. HSMS was integral to the development of the H Street Strategic Development Plan (Office of Planning ("OP"), FY02-03) and the Transportation and Streetscape Improvement Plan (District Department of Transportation ("DDOT"), FY04). The final plans reflect the participation of hundreds of community residents, were sanctioned by neighborhood ANCs, and guide HSMS activities. HSMS works with OP and DDOT to translate these recommendations to reality. In its initial 18 months of operation, HSMS has accomplished the following:

- Created a Board representative of all H Street stakeholders
- Established 501c3 status
- Secured an office for meetings and operations (Bank of America in-kind donation worth $240,000)
- Created volunteer-based committees (Economic Revitalization, Promotion, Design, and Organization) to focus revitalization efforts

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- Facilitated DC Commission on Arts & Humanities "Expressive Sign" project to create quality signs as an integral part of façade improvement ($180,000, 2003 - 04)
- Created H Street Business Express merchant assistance program in association with Washington Area Community Investment Fund and DHCD (2003-2004)
- Published the H Street Business Directory in 2004 (an H Street business directory was last published in 1996)
- Established Farmer's Market (begins June 2004)

HSMS committees promote commercial activity on the corridor through advertising, promotion, merchant receptions, technical assistance, and new business recruitment. HSMS is working to establish storefront design guidelines, hold periodic clean-ups, and work with area developers to bring in new investment.

III Comments

Abdo's September 13, 2004 application requesting consolidated review and one-step approval of a Planned Unit Development ("PUD") and a corresponding amendment to the Zoning Map of the District of Columbia should be approved. Abdo's proposal to build approximately 500 new residential units at the Site is consistent and supports the vision announced in the H Street Strategic Development Plan, specifically an urban living environment to the Western Gateway of H Street.

The Western Gateway is defined as North Capitol Street to 7th Street along H Street. Under H Street Strategic Development Plan the Western Gateway will be the literal and symbolic bridge between H Street, North Capitol and Union Station and destinations throughout the City.

Consistent with the H Street Strategic Development Plan, Abdo has proposed to have access from its project directly on to the Hopscotch Bridge. This important key feature will thus promote pedestrian traffic to not only Union Station, but to the merchants on H Street. As the project does to only provide residential units, the merchants, with services including theaters, dry cleaning, hardware supplies, and banks, would benefit from the influx of new residents located on H Street.

Additional points in support of Abdo's application are:

1. The project will include approximately 19,852 square feet of affordable housing, which may equate to approximately 20-25 units.

2. The project will require no residential displacement of current residents.

3. The project calls for significant street and landscaping that will enhance the aesthetics of the current property.

4. Abdo has indicated a willingness to engage community stakeholders in the economic opportunities afforded by such a large development, as evidenced by its willingness and commitment to hire local residents to work on the project.

5. Abdo has a proven track record in developing historic sites with an eye to maintaining the attractiveness of the historic site, without being intrusive upon the surrounding community.

6. Abdo also recognizes their role in the revitalization process of H Street NE and how the project will impact the whole corridor.

Business ventures such as this will hopefully start a new trend, by showcasing opportunities and attract other developers and entrepreneurs to invest along H Street. Abdo has meet with the Board of HSMS, as well as various other community organizations to fully explain its plans for the project. Good faith acts like this show that this organization is committed to the overall well being of the community's economy and the residents.

IV Conclusion

In Conclusion, HSMS would like to recommend that the Zoning Commission approve the application submitted by Abdo for the Site. We applaud Abdo for doing their part in the success of ventures that aim to bring vitality and opportunities to H Street. The success of this project will aid us in our quest to recruit more quality investment along H Street, NE.

Sincerely,

Anwar Saleem,
Chairman, H Street Main Street

cc: Sharon Ambrose, Councilmember – Ward 6