Testimony of Andy Litsky
Chairman of ANC-6D
Before the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
Case No. 05-08
Capital Gateway Overlay District Text Amendment, Squares 702-706 & Res. 247
June 2, 2005

Good evening Chairman Mitten and members of the Commission.

My name is Andy Litsky and I am the chairman of ANC-6D, representing the neighborhood in which the baseball stadium has been proposed. I am testifying this evening on behalf of our commission which voted unanimously at our regularly scheduled monthly meeting on May 9, 2005 to oppose the text amendment to the South Capital Gateway Overlay and urge you to give great weight to our concerns.

ANC-6D has been on record as opposing this specific site for the baseball stadium since it was proposed. We believe that a stadium, in the area under consideration this evening, does not fit with the character of the Anacostia Waterfront Plan as it had been originally envisioned. We continue to strongly believe that a stadium will have a significantly deleterious effect on the quality of life in the SW/Near Southeast neighborhood that we represent for a host of reasons, including but not limited to concerns about environmental quality, public safety, traffic and availability of adequate parking that will result from placing the stadium on this site.

We have had an opportunity to meet with Office of Planning to discuss their proposal. In their supplemental report to the Zoning Commission regarding this overlay, it appears as though they did improve over their original proposal, but only slightly. It still has several problems which we hope that the Commission will address in its decision.

If the city insists that we accept a major construction project that we have said that we do not want, at the very least the city should make every attempt to minimize the harm that this project will cause our neighborhood. But the proposal's design criteria - Sections 1606.19 & 1606.20 -- gives us almost no protection. The sections separate neighborhood harm (1606.19) from the less intrusive aspects of stadium design (Section 1606.20). But each section simply lists criteria. No where does either section require that the Zoning Commission give priority to minimizing the harm to our neighborhood residents. For example, the provisions appear to give equal or greater weight to whether ticket buyers have views of the Capitol Dome instead of addressing, *as a priority*, whether stadium noise will keep us up at night. We contend that the health, safety and the quality of life of our current 12,000 residents -- with nearly half again that number to be living here within the next decade -- matter more than whether people holding luxury boxes have a clear view of anything other than the action on the playing field. If a stadium on the Anacostia will provide the economic benefits that its proponents claim, then the Zoning Commission hardly needs to require a design that enhances the t

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buyer's experience and causes our community to make sacrifices to health, safety and quality of life.

Parking: OP's 'response' to our objections to their plan merely summarizes its original draft. As such, OP continues to defend their insistence that parking for a stadium accommodating more than 40,000 people should allow for a significantly inadequate number of parking spaces. Although they did increase the number of spaces in this revised submission, even 1,200 spaces are inadequate for a build of this magnitude and currently violates zoning regulations pertaining to the minimum number of parking spaces for construction. Further, the "neighborhood impact zone" developed The DC Sports and Entertainment Commission delineates an area that is clearly circumscribed to present an area that would appear to be minimally harmful to the neighborhoods directly to the west and to the Capitol Hill neighborhoods to the north of the Expressway.

OP's revision contains no response to our concern that inadequate parking will lead to fierce competition with residents for scarce on-street parking spaces. This is an obfuscation of major proportion. Further, the number of spaces set aside for on-site tour bus parking is also of significant concern. Tour buses are a major problem in our neighborhood right now. The thought of an *additional* 50 or 100 busses traversing our streets, searching for parking, spewing emissions and adding to a further decline in the quality of our air is something that concerns us greatly.

Environmental Concerns: We continue to oppose the idea that the Zoning Commission should be required to consider views from the seats in approving stadium design. Government need not regulate in order to improve a product for patrons. There are already plenty of economic incentives to build a stadium that enhances the experience of attending a ballgame. There is no need for such a requirement in the zoning overlay. Such a requirement suggests that the Zoning Commission should equally weigh the fan experience with the effect on the neighborhood. But the designer and the owners have NO economic incentive to protect the neighborhood. What economists call "externality," is precisely the kind of interest for which our communities need government protection. The government ought not to equally weigh competing interests when there are only economic incentives for one side.

It has been reported in this morning's *Washington Times*, and as we have seen this in rendering after rendering, that the two architectural firms hired to design the stadium are more than leaning toward orienting the stadium with a direct view northward -- toward the U.S. Capitol dome. Environmental studies have not been undertaken that will address the issues of noise and light that will emanate from the ballpark that will severely impact the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Most importantly, however, is that this administration caved to the insistence of major league baseball that the new stadium be placed at this site and its location on the Anacostia Riverfront was the major selling point. Now, in addition to the negative impact that we believe such a northward orientation will have on our surrounding neighborhoods, and the effect that such an orientation will have in competing with views

of the Capitol Dome for all concerned -- what such an orientation does is to quite literally turn its back on the Anacostia River and all that its rebirth now represents. Quite frankly, a northward orientation will be a final slap in the face to thousands of District residents and regional representatives who have embraced the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative -- which, rightly, ought to be considered the true legacy of the Williams Administration.

Traffic: Over the course of the past four years, development projects -- in particular Waterside Mall and the SW Waterfront renewal -- have required that traffic studies be undertaken to demonstrate the impact of those projects upon the surrounding neighborhood. What was determined in each study was that traffic along M Street, SW has been and is currently rated an "F," the worst traffic rating that can be given. No surprise to residents of Southwest, what has also been shown definitively -- and what Department of Transportation has already publicly admitted -- is that M Street is right now the most heavily trafficked street in the District of Columbia.

And this is currently. This does not take into consideration the additional traffic that will be the result of the elimination of Water Street and the attendant two decade construction of the SW Waterfront. Nor does it take into consideration the opening of Fourth Street, SW and the eventual construction of the Waterside complex. Nor does it take into consideration the build out of the massive SE Federal Center Project. Nor does it take into consideration the proposed reorientation of P Street, SW and the new Ft. McNair gate. Nor does it take into consideration the placement of the new headquarters of the DC Department of Motor Vehicles on M Street, SW and it's attendant one-stop-shopping and enhanced vehicle inspection facility located just three blocks from the stadium site. And it certainly does not take into consideration the massive traffic snarls that will ensue during the anticipated fifteen to twenty years that it will take to reconstruct South Capitol Street and Eleventh Street Bridges -- let alone this massive baseball stadium and the attendant entertainment zone that will develop around it.

City fathers do us no favors by continuing to refuse to look at traffic patterns from a holistic birds-eye view rather than project by project basis when it comes to development in Southwest and Near Southeast. Further, traffic plans that have already been completed have not been released. The ANC has been promised those reports since March of 2003 by consultants to DDOT and we've not seen one shred of paper. And it won't take one more dollar of District money going to Grove Slade or any other parking consultant to demonstrate that we have a current traffic crisis along M Street, that that will only be exacerbated by the placement of the baseball stadium in this area.

ANC has to urge in the strongest of terms that the Zoning Commission not act on this request until there is full and complete disclosure from DDOT and their consultants about every single one of these projects and their projections of resulting traffic patterns. For each massive project contributes cumulatively to a problem that has already created the worst traffic in the city.

Public Safety: We have heard little about the public safety aspects of what bringing and additional 40,000 people to this site 81 days a year will require. However, one thing has

not been discussed at all -- and that is how the year old District Emergency Evacuation Plan envisions evacuating an additional unindoctrinated 40,000 baseball patrons -- should such terrible situation ever need to be undertaken. The South Capitol and Eleventh Street Bridges are being rebuilt -- two massive projects that may take twenty years to complete -- far beyond the envisioned 1998 ribbon cutting and half again as much time as the entire productive life a new stadium. Further, with these bridges even partially out of commission, water routes sealed off and with Pennsylvania Avenue being the "Maginot Line" for any evacuation route, an additional 40,000 people using this facility could hold chilling consequences for the residents of Southwest, Near Southeast and Capitol Hill, and employees at the S.E. Federal Center and U.S. Capitol Complex should such an emergency evacuation ever be required. No one has brought this issue up and it needs to be addressed forthrightly.

I ask you to please strongly consider the objections that ANC-6D has to this plan and urge the Commission to give great weight to our concerns. Thank you for your time.