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May 19, 2006

Ms. Carol J. Mitten, Chair

District of Columbia Zoning Commission ZONING COMMISSION
One Judiciary Square District of Columbia

441 4th Street NW, Suite 210S
Washington, D.C. 20001

CASE NO. 05-10 Ltr.
EXHIBIT NO. 18

Dear Ms. Mitten

With the Zoning Commission's extension of the public record for the Capitol Gateway Overlay (Case 5-10), we would like to take this opportunity to provide initial comments regarding this important matter. Please note that these are staff comments only and do not reflect the official position of our Commission. As you are aware, this zoning action affects the rapidly developing South Capitol Street corridor and its surrounding district. The National Capital Planning Commission's 1997 *Extending the Legacy* plan identified the South Capitol Street corridor as an important federal interest since the corridor is a critical gateway to the Nation's capital. *Legacy* envisioned a newly constructed South Capitol Street and a revitalized neighborhood consisting of mixed-use development, cultural and commemorative uses and new open space and parks along the Anacostia River. Through the creation of the Capitol Gateway Zoning in 2002, the Zoning Commission helped advance the *Legacy* vision.

In comments to the Zoning Commission in 2002 regarding the original adoption of the Capitol Gateway Overlay, NCPC recommended that once a joint District-Federal South Capitol Street study was completed, the Zoning Commission consider developing zoning tools to encourage the avenue to develop as a coherent corridor and gateway. In 2004, NCPC formed the South Capitol Street Task Force to coordinate many of the federal and local proposals for South Capitol Street's redesign and ensure that the planning of the avenue and its surrounding area were reflective of this area's importance to the Nation's Capital. The Task Force envisioned South Capitol Street as a coherent, pedestrian friendly corridor with consistent setbacks and building heights. You will find a summary of the Task Force's recommendations in the attached brochure.

The proposed amendment to the Capitol Gateway Overlay establishes a consistent 15-foot building setback line on buildings fronting on South Capitol Street south of M Street. The intent of this provision is to ensure a uniform street wall through the corridor and we strongly support this objective as being consistent with the NCPC's 2002 recommendation to the Zoning Commission and the South Capitol Street Task Force recommendations.

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We also recommend an extension of the Capitol Gateway Overlay boundaries to include the west side of South Capitol Street between M and P Streets, for the purposes of establishing a uniform street wall and mandatory Zoning Commission review for new development in the portions of Squares 0655, 0653 and 0651 that front on South Capitol Street. We are aware that the goal of establishing a uniform street wall along the west side of South Capitol Street is complicated by the fact that the right-of-way expands from 130 feet to 155 feet between K and N Streets. We have discussed options for achieving this goal with staff of the Office of Planning and the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation and are in general agreement on the objective. We are confident that the Office of Planning will develop suitable recommendations for the Zoning Commission to address this issue when it considers extending the Capitol Gateway Overlay.

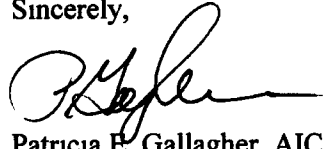
Ultimately, the Zoning Commission should also consider a future amendment that extends the Capitol Gateway Overlay boundaries along South Capitol Street north of M Street. NCPC's South Capitol Street Task Force envisioned the southern gateway to the Capitol as a coherent corridor stretching from the revitalized Anacostia Waterfront to a newly recreated Virginia Avenue, just south of the US Capitol grounds. We are aware that the Capitol South Receiving Zone is in the area east of South Capitol Street between M and Virginia Avenue and this would complicate efforts to extend the 15-foot setback line north of M Street. However, we note that South Capitol Street is poised on the cusp of an historic transformation. We offer our assistance to the District of Columbia to seek a solution to this dilemma in anticipation of a day when the Southeast-Southwest Freeway will be removed and South Capitol Street can achieve the full vision of the *Legacy* plan.

Finally, I would like to note that in comments to the Zoning Commission in 2002 regarding the original adoption of the Capitol Gateway Overlay, NCPC noted its strong interest in the future redevelopment of South Capitol Street and the Anacostia Waterfront, and requested that NCPC be included as a referral agency in the special exception process for the CG/W-2 zone along the waterfront. The Zoning Commission agreed with this request and included NCPC in the process. In the current action, the Zoning Commission is applying the same Special Exception review requirement to South Capitol Street. To ensure that this corridor develops in a manner that is consistent with the *Legacy* and the South Capitol Street Task Force, we request that NCPC again be included as a referral agency in the special exception process for the CG/CR zone along South Capitol Street.

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We appreciate this opportunity to provide you with our initial staff comments related to this important zoning action. Our Commission is looking forward to formally reviewing the project once the Zoning Commission has taken a proposed action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Gallagher', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP
Executive Director