February 2006

Carol J. Mitten, Chairperson
Government of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Chairperson Mitten:

I am writing in my capacity as a private citizen to respond to the on-line transcript from your Nov. 14, 2005, public meeting regarding the West Group PUD application (Case No. 05-30). I am a resident in the area. The Office of Planning gave an initial assessment of the application to the Zoning Commission. I could not sit by and let you make any decisions from that testimony without bringing keys points to your attention from the community's perspective. Please find the information below that is of concern:

Page 52: "… property is four houses …with 10,000 square feet."
(Observation: These numbers not correct. There would be more than four homes, less than 10,000 sq. ft each.)

Page 52: "The proposed map amendment would rezone the site from R-1-B to R-5-A which allows Land Use Map which recommends the subject site for low density residential."
(Observation: What is being proposed in this traditionally low residential area is high density, not low density.)

Page 53: "Amenities provided by this project will be an attractive and functional residential community that promotes homeownership with a variety of housing types to encourage long-term residency and increase neighborhood stability."
(Observation: This is more the definition of what the developer's mission is rather than a community amenity. The community *already* has mostly long-term, and stable, residents.)

Page 53: "Flexibility would be required from several provisions of the Zoning Regulations, including the lot occupancy, side yard requirements for townhomes and single-family residences, FAR requirements for the proposed townhomes and relief from sections 410 and 2516 of the Zoning Regulations for the townhomes to be considered as groups of single buildings."
(Observation: It is one thing to be flexible, but why must established rules be bent so far back and be bent on so many counts to accommodate this project, especially considering the quote below?)

Page 54: "We believe that the applicant is getting twice the number of residences that would be allowed under R-1-B Zone, which is approximately 360,000 square feet and then with 257,000 square feet of density.
(Observation: One of the *chief* complaints and concerns of the community is increased density. *We don't want two times as many homes* crowded onto this plot of land.)

Page 54: "We have asked the applicant to submit additional info prior to the Public hearing for further review, including highlighting all the units that do not meet the yard and other requirements…"
(Observation: Once again, concessions are given to the developer beyond the standard requirements. Please make sure this is addressed at the public hearing by the developer.)

Page 55-56: "At the top I see a few sites where there's going to be a proposed storm drain, proposed storm drainage, but my concern is the New Hampshire Avenue side and those families who will be having those basements. I'm not sure how the water is going to run off and that's my concern…"
(Observation: The transcript mentions a 45-degree slope in reference to this statement. As a resident in the area, anyone can tell you that this hilly property *always* has had water and drainage problems. Proper and sufficient drainage of the property is a must for homes, basements, street run-off, drainage, ice and pedestrian safety.)

Page 56-57: "We understand that the density is increased, but we did agree that the applicant's statement when it was broken down into number of units per acre for the site, it fell right between the R-2 and the R-3 density of 17 units per acre where the R-2 and the R-3 density of 17 units per acre where the R-2 is about 14 units per acre and the R-3 is 22 units per acre. S in that respect, we believe that we can support it as being within the limits of that range of a single family zone district."

(**Observation:** No. R-2 is 14 units and R-3 is 22 units, it sounds like by current law, 17 units does not fit into either zone requirements and gives the developer too much slack for both varying from R-2 and R-3 zone standards.)

Page 57: "And it also seems that when you were looking at their lot occupancy calculations that they were including the roadways and alleyway system as part of their lots. Is that correct or is that why their lot coverage is so low, because otherwise it seems like what would typically be a saleable lot is significantly smaller than what would customarily be allowed."
(**Observation:** If the City would approve zone changes or lot size changes to accommodate a citizen buying part of the roadway and alleyway as part of a home that would be unforgivable. Then, it is all the more important that no variation from zone standards be granted.)

Page 58: "My first concern is that it just seems to be too dense particularly compared to a surrounding neighborhood."
(**Observation**: Yes, many in the community feel this way. Why should this community have to change the whole cultural face and standard of living it has become accustomed to?)

Page 65: "Well, overall, the community and the ANC supported the project."
(**Observation:** This is incorrect. The ANC has not taken a formal vote on this matter as of this writing. Therefore, it certainly *cannot be said* that they are in favor. In fact the ANC in whose Single Member District the property sits on has made it known that she opposes the development, and we understand she has recently written to you of that fact. Others are still formulating a decision.

Page 71: "...there is a zoning lot that is Lot E that is off of Peabody Street, N. E., and this is something that I have been dealing with the Board of Zoning Adjustment some, as well, but the concept that a trellis can be used to join two stand-alone buildings and, thus, create a single building for zoning purposes, I do not find anything in the Zoning Regs to support that and I would like to get that addressed by the applicant if this moves forward."
(**Observation:** If no such animal exists under Zoning Regs, don't start the experimentation with us. Besides, it sounds like a bad idea. If the trellis blows down then will you have structural damage?)

Page 72: "One other thing is is there a problem with the proximity of Rittenhouse place with the intersection of Rittenhouse and New Hampshire Avenue? I'm not sure what the planned use level is of that road, but it seems to be one of the major streets through the development and it's a very short distance away from a fairly major intersection."
(**Observation:** Yes, this is another serious community concern. Traffic is great concern with this project. New Hampshire is a major thoroughfare and a gateway to the city, and currently inadequately handles traffic from D.C and Maryland. These streets were designed at least 60 years ago for a residential community with few to no cars. Needless to say, the road does NOT currently handle the traffic sufficiently and the way traffic lights are set up out of necessity further impedes traffic. Furthermore, mass transportation on New Hampshire is not meeting current needs. Add to that 200 new households, 400-800 new people in that development and pets — and don't let any other major occurrence be necessary like the current construction of a nearby bridge — and the result is chaos.)

Most key, at least two zoning commissioners expressed surprise that the community "approved" such a project, and one called us a "unique" neighborhood based upon experience with other neighborhoods. We cannot emphasize strongly enough that we ARE NOT unique regarding density concerns — neither *the community as a whole nor the ANC* has formally "approved" this project in a structured way.

We really care about where we live just like everyone else. As taxpayers, we are relying on you to truly hear the community and work with us in doing what is best for it. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Cordially,

Lillian Howard

Name

243 Quackenbos St., NE 20011

Address (street, city, zip code)