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**Statement Regarding West Group (WG) Planned Unit Development (PUD)
Proposal Case No. 05-30**

July 17, 2006

Carol J. Mitten, Chairperson
D.C. Zoning Commission
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street, N. W., Suite 210 South
Washington, D. C. 20001

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 05-30 Ltr.
EXHIBIT NO. 45

Dear Commissioner Mitten and Zoning Commission Members:

I am providing a statement regarding Case No. 05-30 in a two-fold capacity:

1. As a private citizen who owns a single family home (SFH) that is 1-½ blocks from the proposed PUD site at 6000 New Hampshire Ave. NE. While as a technical matter my residence is more than 200 feet from the site, it is no more than 500 feet; therefore, the proposed PUD will greatly impact me.
2. As secretary of Citizens Aware (CA) Block Organization, which has provided a detailed statement under separate cover signed by CA President Yvonne Jefferson on behalf of our organization.

Role as Private Citizen

My overarching concern is that homes built on that site provide an opportunity for socio-economic diversity. While reports and studies indicate that the sky-high housing prices in the District are flattening slightly, many homes in D.C. are out of the price range of even the “average” middle class family. I know persons in middle-class, two-wage earner families who would like to move back to the city, but cannot afford to do so. Any new residential development needs to be oriented toward such persons. In that regard, *very expensive homes should not be part of any new residential development at 6000 New Hampshire Ave. NE. The preference should be for primarily workforce/middle class housing. A development that meets this goal would be satisfactory to me upon detailed review.* While I have no problem with a few homes designed for very high-income individuals, such homes should not be the bulk of what is built.

I say this not just due to concern about rising property taxes as a result of nearby very expensive homes. That would be the downside — which I believe is inevitable whatever is built there — but the upside would be increased value of my own property. But I say this mostly as someone who bought my first home in this community 10 years ago with a “workforce” salary. Thinking about my own experience, I desire for others to have the same opportunity I had — to be able to afford a home in an established community with a workforce/middle class income, and build from there. I also desire that there not be an *extreme* shift in socio-economic status once you cross one side of New Hampshire Ave. to the other.

Ideally, the type of homes that encourage long-term living — like those that currently exist in our stable community of primarily SFHs and townhomes — should be a key design component. A June 28 *Washington Post* article on an Urban Institute (UI) study of D.C. housing patterns noted that “nearly all the homes under construction this year and last have been condominiums or apartments, as opposed to single-family housing” Peter Tatian, an UI senior research associate, was quoted as saying such a trend could “throw the city’s housing supply off balance,” because condominiums and apartments tend to attract singles or couples, while families with children seek houses, and if we are not attracting the latter group, “we’re creating a population base *that is not going to be as stable in many neighborhoods...* People will come here

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and spend a few years, and when they decide to get married or start a family, they leave.” [Emphasis added.] Our neighborhood has always provided stability, and any new development should reflect that.

Role as CA Secretary

Because of CA’s written testimony, and CA representatives who will testify at the hearing regarding our organization’s concerns, I will not repeat CA’s concerns here, other than to say I respect and advance CA’s position in my official role as secretary — my main worry, which CA is aware of, is the price point of any all-SFH property. I will add a few personal points, however:

1. *General comment.* Complete community consensus may be impossible to achieve, and past acts by various parties have complicated that goal. But I believe with more time, improved leadership, communication and discussion that more can be done in a more systematic way to address concerns about density, traffic, parking encroachment, etc. Also, while I appreciate the WG’s efforts to discuss this project with the community, apparently at times it would change based upon conversations with very small groups, and even individuals. A larger scale, final analysis of community needs/opinions would be/still is preferable.

2. *Community benefits.* While that has been partly addressed mainly from the standpoint of the property design, no real, agreed-upon, contractual specifics have been discussed with the community at large about providing satisfactory (for what we would be “giving up” in terms of density, etc. with the PUD) enhanced benefits to nearby schools, community facilities, etc. Regarding schools in particular, enhanced benefits could be helpful in re-establishing long-term living in the city.

3. *“Affordable housing” set-asides.* At least 10 units have been designated as such. But how much will those units affect the cost of the other homes? Apparently, it is common practice for builders to agree to set-asides but adjust upward the cost of the remaining homes. Also, we need more data on whether setting aside only 5 percent (out of a nearly 200-unit property) is sufficient as a common developer practice.

4. *Condo rental/softening of market.* Reports show a potential glut of new condo construction. Could this ultimately result in the existing buildings being converted to apartments due to lack of demand 2-3 years down the road? Even if the units remain condo, we need to see contractual language on the WG’s statement that the units will be “no rental” and how long such a policy can realistically last (particularly when the UI study found that 34 percent of condos in D.C. are bought as investment properties). Also, we must consider how owners could use creative financing or other methods to circumvent that rule (e.g., I read how a condo owner in a “no rental” property sold a renter a 1-percent interest in a condo).

5. *Traffic.* No detailed discussion has occurred about changes to Metro service needed in light of increased population. More clarity is needed on avoiding traffic diversion unto existing side streets.

6. *Name of new development.* A minor point, but because it is common to formally “name” new developments, any new development at 6000 New Hampshire Ave. should be named so that it appears to be a part of, not completely distinct from, the existing community.

Based on the issues expressed above, no final action should be taken to approve the PUD at this stage until further analysis of the project and a more systematic community discussion with WG occurs.

Cordially,



Gwen Vample

cc: Cherita Whiting, ANC 4B08 Commissioner/ 4B Chairman
Adrian Fenty, Ward 4 Councilmember