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D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

Written Statement

In opposition to Map Amendment

Case No. 07-14A

Public hearing date: September 13, 2007

2007 SEP 20 PM 2: 59

My name is Gerri Williams and I live in Ward 5 near the area being considered for re-zoning along Rhode Island Avenue NE. This area is the target for intense redevelopment and we are all too aware that re-zoning can change the character of an area permanently.

Israel Manor, Inc. is one of the "partners" that has been identified in a plan announced by the Ward 5 DC Councilmember. This plan includes the newly rechristened as the Ward 5 Harmony Career Center, formerly known as the Multicultural Training and Employment Center.

The property under consideration directly adjoins an area currently used by dozens, sometimes hundreds of unregulated, itinerant laborers from outside of the community who solicit for day work. Studies have shown that 75%-85% of these are illegal migrants who are not authorized to work in the United States. The Ward 5 Councilmember has proposed establishing a center that would have services geared toward manual laborers, "including those seeking work from contactors at the Home Depot site." (quote from the Fact Sheet) and has obtained \$500,000 for that purpose.

Up until recently, casual workers, many of them actual residents of Ward 5, have been able to find this type of work through the Department of Employment Services and other job placement outlets. Legal workers and potential employers who want to pay a fair wage –and taxes – have sufficient alternates to link with each other.

The purpose of the Harmony Career Center continues to shift along with its name, and its future physical location also seems to be a mystery. Logic indicates, however, that it would be located where the labors gather now, that is, adjacent to the Home Depot.

Re-zoning that would allow establishment of a day labor center –or services for such work within another structure – will have a huge negative impact for the District of Columbia, which does not have a permanent work site for day laborers and for Ward 5 specifically. As the neighboring states of Maryland and Virginia seek to crack down on their illegal worker problems, D.C. will become that target of illegal workers looking for opportunities. Our neighborhoods, already burdened with unemployment and crime will bear the brunt of this influx.

I will also mention that in the community meetings I have attended on this issue, there has been vehement opposition from Ward 5 residents regarding the day labor center. To my knowledge, there has been no survey undertaken asking for the input of residents, no studies of impact on the neighborhoods, traffic issues, duplication of already existing services, and no accounting for future costs to the taxpayers if the day labor center

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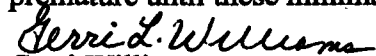
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becomes part of the larger plan of which Israel Manor is a partner. Re-zoning is premature until these minimal requirements have been met.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gerri L. Williams".

Gerri Williams

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