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Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia
441 4th St NW, Ste 200-S
Washington DC 20001

February 5, 2015

RE CASE NO 14-17 (AE Tower, LLC – Map Amendment @ Square 4310)

Dear Zoning Commission Officers and Staff,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in front of you tonight I am speaking today as the executive director of the Friends of Rhode Island Avenue NE and the Rhode Island Avenue Main Street program, in reference to Zoning Amendment Case 14-17, Square 4310 I am also a resident of the ANC single member district that encompasses this property

The Rhode Island Avenue NE Main Street program exists for the purpose of supporting and enhancing the commercial corridor of Rhode Island Avenue NE In our day-to-day activities, we provide access to façade improvement grant funds and educational opportunities for small business owners, as well as a variety of corridor design improvements and promotional events intended to attract more visitors and new businesses to the corridor Equally importantly, the Rhode Island Avenue Main Street program exists to give the residents of the surrounding neighborhood the opportunity to have a voice in types of businesses and the direction of development that we want to see in our community Community members have spoken loudly and clearly when they say they want more neighborhood-serving retail and dining options, and fewer blighted, vacant properties – in short, a more vibrant and attractive commercial corridor Based on various urban planning studies that have been conducted for Rhode Island Avenue NE, including the Rhode Island Avenue NE Small Area Plan, developed in 2011 by the office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Development, it is clear that in order to attract and support the types of businesses that our neighbors have indicated they want, we must encourage an increase in residential density It simply makes sense to encourage this density increase along the primary corridor of RIA-NE, where appropriately-zoned properties already exist

This particular square, currently zoned R-1-B, represents half of a total property that has been for sale for several years, where the other half of the property is already zoned C-2-A Square 4310 is actually a paved lot, formerly used for parking for a church, and prior to that, an auto sales lot This lot has been a magnet for illegal trash dumping, and is usually overgrown with weeds Additionally, it is located on the end of a block where the rest of the properties are already zoned C-2-A The shape and size of square 4310 renders it highly unlikely to ever house a single family home However, by approving this zoning amendment, the total property is adequate size and shape for a small-scale development of apartments, townhomes, or condos, and ground floor retail

We are also aware of the fact that a PUD was not recommended for the currently proposed development, and that the owner will be able to build by right Mr Elyas and his development team began community outreach on this project during summer of 2014, and have sought input and feedback from neighbors at ANC 5C and 5C01 SMD meetings Thus far, they have exhibited a willingness to work with the community, and in particular, the neighbors most directly impacted by the project, to address structural and impact concerns, and to incorporate design ideas

Regardless of the actual final developer involved, I can say that on behalf of Rhode Island Avenue NE Main Street, we support this proposed amendment, as it is congruent with the recommendations from DMPED and Office of Planning, and when developed, will contribute to an increase in residential density that will help us attract the types of retailers that our community wants to support Thank you again for the opportunity to speak tonight I look forward to your decision

Best regards,

Kyle Todd, Executive Director
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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.14-17
EXHIBIT NO.29