THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

THE PENSION BUILDING
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OFFICE OF ZONING
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

22 August 1996

Re.: Zoning Commission Case No. 96-3/89-1
(Map Amendment and Overlay District at Buzzard Point - Capitol Gateway.)

Dear Ms. Dobbins:

The Commission of Fine Arts is pleased that you will be addressing the Buzzard Point area, a major sector of the City that has been sadly neglected not only by the private sector, but by the local and federal governments, as well.

Although our involvement is limited technically to Fort McNair to the west and the Southeast Federal Center to the east, the permitted scale of construction within the Buzzard Point Overlay District could easily have an adverse effect on those facilities over which we do have jurisdiction, most notably Fort McNair: an historic, low density site.

In May 1988, the Zoning Commission requested the advice of the Commission of Fine Arts on a matter concerning a proposed mixed-use project adjacent to Fort McNair: Capitol Point Development. (Z.C. case 87-4P.) The proposal included structures that would have loomed as much as 110 to 130 feet over the historic base. After careful consideration, the Commission of Fine Arts turned down the project on the basis of excessive height, recommending new construction be limited to 62 feet, the height of the library building at the National Defense University.

With this in mind, we were dismayed that the Buzzard Point Overlay District immediately adjacent to Fort McNair may be re-zoned CR, allowing for a maximum building height of 90 feet. We also noted, however, that the Map Amendment would provide a W-2 "buffer zone" at the waterfront, reducing the maximum building height at that sensitive location to 60 feet.

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District of Columbia
CASE NO.96-3
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The Commission of Fine Arts asks that consideration be given to incorporating a similar W-2 buffer along the eastern edge of Fort McNair. We feel that this would be a reasonable step to take if the character of this historic facility is to be maintained.

Our staff is available should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Atherton
Secretary

Ms. Madeliene H. Dobbins, Director
Office of zoning
441 4th Street, N.W. Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20001