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D.C. OFFICE OF PLANNING

2007 FEB -5 PM 12: 14



January 31, 2007

Ms. Carol J. Mitten, Chair
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
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Washington, D.C. 20001

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Dear Ms. Mitten:

We would like to take this opportunity to comment on Zoning Case 06-46 (Capitol Gateway Overlay District Review at Square 701 - Monument Ballpark). As this project was not referred to us prior to advertisement for the February National Capital Planning Commission meeting, we are not able to place this item on the Commission agenda for comment. Please note that these are staff comments only and do not reflect the official position of our Commission.

We recognize that the subject project is an important component of the redeveloping ballpark/waterfront district, and support the proposed development. We have reviewed the project submission and note that it does not appear to adversely affect any Federal interests, and with a building height limit of 110 feet, it complies with the Height of Buildings Act of 1910.

However, we do not support the concept proposed for the development of Half Street, SE, and believe that creation of a curbless street is not consistent with the District's urban landscape. Additionally, it is reasonable to anticipate that such development may effect "privatization" of an original L'Enfant street by laying the groundwork for it to become a pedestrian mall that is also frequently closed to vehicular traffic. Such actions would be counter to the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, policies 3, 8, 11, and 12 to preserve the Historic Plan of Washington, D.C. These policies state, respectively, that the Federal Government should "Preserve the historic street rights-of-way and reservations that contribute to the significant system of open space forming the urban design framework of the nation's capital," "Protect and control the visual and functional qualities of L'Enfant rights-of-way," "Protect the integrity, form, and design of the L'Enfant Plan's system of streets and reservations from inappropriate new buildings and physical incursions," and "Protect the historic importance and function of the streets as vehicular thoroughfares and avoid inappropriate traffic channelization that obscures the character of the right-of-way."

We would also like to express our agreement with the District of Columbia's Office of Planning and Department of Transportation recommendations from earlier this month, to continue the public hearing to allow the applicant to resolve any outstanding design issues before a final action is taken. Reports from both of these agencies included requests for additional design details for the Half Street streetscape, and asked that the case not be approved without further review.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide you with our staff comments related to this important zoning action. Please feel free to contact Ellyn Goldkind of my staff on (202) 482-7248 if you have any related questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Saum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christine Saum, Director
Urban Design and Plan Review Division