

August 24, 2021

D.C. Zoning Commission  
Office of Zoning  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Suite 200-S  
Washington, DC 20001

Re: **Z.C. Case No. 21-09 – Application of US Union Square DC 899 LLC, US Union Square DC 901 LLC, and US Union Square DC 999 LLC for Design Review of Structures on Lot 298 in Square 675 (the “Property”) – Prehearing Submission**

Dear Chair Hood and Members of the Zoning Commission:

This letter and enclosed materials serve as the prehearing submission for the application of US Union Square DC 899 LLC, US Union Square DC 901 LLC, and US Union Square DC 999 LLC (collectively, the “**Applicant**”) in the above-referenced case. As discussed in the initial submission, the Property is currently improved with two office buildings — 899 and 999 North Capitol Street, N.E. — with an open plaza between the two buildings. The Applicant is proposing a two-phase project on the Property: Phase 1 consists of renovating the existing office buildings at 899 and 999 North Capitol Street, N.E. and constructing ground-level expansions of both buildings, including new retail space along North Capitol Street; and Phase 2 consists of developing a mixed-use building at 901 North Capitol Street, N.E. with lodging and ground-floor retail uses to occupy a portion of the existing plaza (both phases together, the “**Project**”).

As discussed below, the Applicant has conducted extensive outreach with relevant District agencies and the community regarding the Project. The Project team has devoted careful attention to achieving a Project design that strikes the delicate balance between acknowledgement of, and appropriate deference to, the character of the existing built environment in the surrounding area, while at the same time producing a vibrant new presence on North Capitol Street that will reinvigorate this portion of the corridor and serve to elevate it as a monumental boulevard, in furtherance of the relevant design review standards set forth under the Zoning Regulations. Likewise, the Project team has worked diligently to ensure that the design is responsive to community and agency feedback and accomplishes the design intent to create a much more welcoming pedestrian environment than currently exists at the Property, establish attractive and

dynamic gathering spaces in and around the Property, generate additional foot traffic by establishing activating retail uses along North Capitol Street, and providing a pleasant pedestrian passageway to support the Property's through-connection to 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE to the east. The Project design reflects careful refinement of the aesthetic approach and design solutions implemented to address the various — often competing — needs and objectives of the Project, with due respect for, and response to, the character of the existing neighborhood.

## **I. Updated Plans and Enhancements to Project**

Attached as Exhibit A are updated architectural plans and project diagrams for the Project (“**Updated Plans**”).

The Updated Plans include, among other things, the following enhancements:

- Short term bicycle parking – Additional short-term bicycle parking was incorporated in response to community feedback, as shown on Pages L2, L3, L5, and L6 and L02-L04, L07 and L09 of the Updated Plans.
- Public seating – Public seating features were integrated in response to community feedback, as shown on Pages L2-L6 and Pages L02-L05, L07, L09 of the Updated Plans.
- Signage plans – Modest signage plans for both the existing buildings and new hotel have been included, as shown on Pages 42–43 and A19–A22.

## **II. Sustainability**

The new hotel building at 901 North Capitol Street, N.E. will be certified LEED v4 Silver for BD+C: New Construction and Major Renovation. Such LEED level was increased from the LEED Certified level, at the request of Office of Planning (“**OP**”) and District Department of Energy and Environment (“**DOEE**”) staff. The Applicant has enclosed a LEED scorecard for the new proposed hotel building as Page A24 of the Updated Plans. The 901 North Capitol building will also include a minimum of approximately 4,000 square feet of green roof area<sup>1</sup>, which has been calculated as the maximum green roof area possible, given the building's structural and size limitations.

The Applicant notes that the existing office structures at 899 and 999 North Capitol Street, N.E. were previously certified as LEED Silver for Operations and Maintenance. The Applicant will have this LEED Silver level recertified. We note that the existing roof infrastructure of these buildings would not permit the installation of solar panels or green roof areas on top of these existing structures. The reuse of the existing structures at 899 and 999 North Capitol Street is a highly sustainable aspect of this project. Further to that end, the Project will include

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<sup>1</sup> The Applicant requests flexibility to adjust such green roof square footage based on structural load limitations and plantings and stormwater management facilities located elsewhere on site.

comprehensive updates to the existing 899 North Capitol Building and 999 North Capitol Building that will result in the buildings being more sustainable than the original 1970s structures. These updates include: a full glazing replacement for both buildings; full LED lighting replacement in the two-level garages for both buildings as well as for exterior lighting; replacement of existing constant volume garage ventilation system with variable ventilation to mitigate energy consumption; refurbished chiller and cooling towers as part of a comprehensive MEP improvement plan; a full building management system upgrade to more efficiently manage building controls for the building's HVAC; and a complete restroom improvement initiative that will reduce water usage by implementing touchless fixtures and automatic toilet flushers and sensor-controlled lighting to minimize excess energy consumption

Although Green Area Ratio (“**GAR**”) is not a requirement for the Project, the Project will comply with GAR requirements. The Project's additional “green” features include sustainable landscaping and plantings throughout the Project plazas and a proposed rooftop bee colony that will help support the District's bee population and the important role it plays in the City's ecology.

### **III. Government Agency and Community Outreach**

The Applicant has conducted substantial outreach with government agency staff to review the Project and receive feedback, including meeting with OP on April 29, 2021 and with the District Department of Transportation (“**DDOT**”) on April 14, 2021 and May 18, 2021, in addition to ongoing communications with staff regarding the Project. The Applicant continues to work with agency staff to achieve an exceptional design for the Project and to receive and incorporate feedback.

In addition, the Applicant has continued its substantial outreach with the community. The Applicant presented to Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“**ANC**”) 6C's Planning, Zoning and Economic Development (“**PZE**”) Committee on June 2, 2021 prior to filing the application, and presented again to the PZE on July 7, 2021 and then to the full ANC 6C at its regular public meeting on July 14, 2021. Likewise, the Applicant presented the Project to ANC 6E's Planning and Zoning Committee July 1, 2021 and then to the full ANC 6E at its regular public meeting on July 6, 2021. Both ANC 6C and ANC 6E voted in support of the application.

### **IV. Conditions and Requested Flexibility**

In response to feedback received from ANC 6C, the Applicant proposes the following condition be incorporated into any final order for the application:

Ground-Floor Windows. The ground story shall devote at least 50% of the new façade surface area facing North Capitol Street to display windows or pedestrian entrances having clear low-emissivity glass and ensure that the view through the display windows and pedestrian entrances is not blocked for at least 10 feet in from the building face.



