

## **Dupont Circle Conservancy**

**c/o 1432 Swann Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009**

September 20, 2011

Mr. Cliff Seagroves, Acting Director  
Office of Foreign Missions' Office of Diplomatic Property, Taxes, Services and Benefits  
United States Department of State  
Room 2236 Harry S Truman Building  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Mr. Matthew LeGrant,  
Administrator responsible for Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment  
District of Columbia Office of Zoning  
One Judiciary Square  
441 Fourth Street, NW, Suite 210S  
Washington, DC 20001

**SUBJECT:** Diplomatic Note No. 10-219, dated October 1, 2010, acknowledging  
Receipt of note No. 377.10/ARC/WDC dated May 17, 2010, from the  
Embassy of the Republic of Congo

and

Zoning Application No. 18162 for Embassy of the Republic of Congo  
Final Order dated April 29, 2011

**RE:** Embassy of the Republic of Congo  
1720 Sixteenth Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Seagroves and Mr. LeGrant:

The Dupont Circle Conservancy (Conservancy), a 501(c)(3) community organization dedicated to preserving the historic character of the Dupont Circle neighborhood, objects strenuously to work now under way at 1720 Sixteenth Street, NW to convert an historic grand residence into the chancery of the Republic of Congo. Specifically, the construction is not consistent with modifications to this historic property approved in Zoning Application

No. 18162 finalized on April 29, 2011. The position of the Conservancy was presented by Thomas Bower, our Vice President, on February 9 and March 3, 2011 to Meridith Moldenhauer, Chair, and the members of the DC Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment regarding Application No. 18162.

We appreciate and thank you Mr. Seagroves for your prompt and detailed request to the Ambassador of the Republic of Congo about the importance of carrying out precisely, no more and no less, the work approved in Zoning Application No. 18162 for this property. We respectfully request that you take whatever additional action is available to you to bring this project into compliance with the specifications contained in that application. We also thank Mr. LeGrant for his close attention to this issue and for sending an inspector promptly to the site.

Since the finalization of Zoning Application No. 18162, the following actions outside its scope have occurred at 1720 Sixteenth Street, NW, under the direction of Ambassador Mombouli:

- Three mature trees in the front lawn have been removed; and
- The entire front lawn, which is DC public space, has been removed and filled in with concrete giving it the appearance of a parking lot making it a visual blight among neighboring residences and other embassies.

Like all the buildings along Sixteenth Street, NW, the grand former residence at 1720 has a generous setback from the public thoroughfare. The setback feature dates back 200 years to Pierre L'Enfant's 1791 Plan for the City of Washington, and it took on added importance in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the street, a direct route to the White House briefly named The Avenue of the Presidents, became one of our city's grand avenues.

Over the years through the work of property owners, all abiding by the spirit of the L'Enfant and later plans and the letter of the law, these front yards have been landscaped and cared for with the result that today a green sward now stretches from Lafayette Square north to the District boundary with the State of Maryland. The attached photos show front landscaping immediately adjacent to 1720 Sixteenth Street, and across Sixteenth in front of the Chastleton, a building of condominiums.

The Conservancy asks the immediate and coordinated action by the Department of State and the DC Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment to have the Government of the Republic of Congo replace the paved over front yard with grass, shrubbery and three reasonably mature trees professionally planted to replace those cut down.

I look forward to hearing from you about the steps that the Department of State will be taking and when or if we may assist in moving this process forward to ensure compliance with the DC Zoning Order by the Government of the Republic of Congo.

Very truly yours,



Rauzia Ruhanna Ally, AIA  
President

Image Attachments: Front yard with plastic sheathing and large gauge wire mesh  
Paved over front yard  
Front public space landscaping immediately adjacent to 1720  
Front public space landscaping at the Chastleton condominiums  
across Sixteenth Street from 1720

Cc: Ambassador Serge Mombouli  
Republic of Congo  
4891 Colorado Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20011  
David Maloney, State Historic Preservation Officer  
Stephen Callcott, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
The Honorable Jack Evans, DC Councilmember, Ward Two  
Charles Robertson, III, Chairman, Subcommittee on Historic Preservation,  
Committee of 100 on the Federal City  
Rebecca Miller, Executive Director, DC Preservation League  
Deborah Schreiber, President, Dupont Circle Citizens Association  
Will Stevens, Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B  
Mike Feldstein, Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B Planning, Zoning, and  
Historic Preservation Committee