

Catrina Rorke  
1112 Girard Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009

November 6, 2014

**Delivery Via E-Mail**

Lloyd Jordan, Chairman  
Board of Zoning Adjustment  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Suite 210S  
Washington, DC 20001  
[bzasubmissions@dc.gov](mailto:bzasubmissions@dc.gov)

Re: **Letter of Support; BZA Variance Application No. 18790; 2724 11<sup>th</sup> Street, NW**

Dear Chairman Jordan and Members of the Board,

I own and reside at 1112 Girard St, NW, which I purchased and rehabilitated in 2010. The entire length of my eastern property line abuts the entire length of the 2724 11<sup>th</sup> St, NW western property line, and mine is the only residence that abuts the building property. Perhaps this makes me uniquely qualified to comment as a neighbor; it certainly means that I will be most affected by work (or lack thereof) at the building.

I support the application in question. I've met with the applicant and reviewed the proposal to add residential units to the building's lower level, improve the façade of the building, and renovate the existing units. The improvements they've suggested will improve living conditions for my neighbors both inside and around the building in a manner that makes the investment affordable and manageable for the applicant. To be perfectly clear, this property needs a considerable amount of rehabilitation, and my primary goal in support of the application is to ensure that my neighbors and I can enjoy a safe neighborhood.

As a relatively new transplant to DC, I moved to Columbia Heights because it is safe, welcoming, and racially, ethnically, and generationally diverse. It's a place that is familiar and easy to call home. When I purchased the property at 1112 Girard St, NW, it had been uninhabited for years and was falling apart. Many investors were interested in the property – which was temporarily placed on the city's blight list because of its condition – as an opportunity to flip it at a high profit. Over the last five years, I've worked to make that home livable, comfortable, and a proper reflection of the history and character of our neighborhood.

Obviously, this information isn't terribly pertinent to the zoning variance under consideration, but will hopefully inform the perspective from which I and many of my neighbors approach this application: our neighborhood is a rich and diverse community, and we'd like it to stay that way.

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My neighbors in 2724 11<sup>th</sup> St, NW have lived for a long time in pretty terrible conditions. The needs are clear, and I am certain that many of my neighbors will enumerate them throughout the application process. As a neighbor adjacent to the property, I have been significantly impacted by the ongoing rat and garbage disposal problems. No one finds the management history of the building to be a sterling record, including the applicant. They have replaced the building's management company and submitted this variance application, reflecting new and long-overdue energy to address these problems and restore the building to a proper condition. That is a goal we should all share.

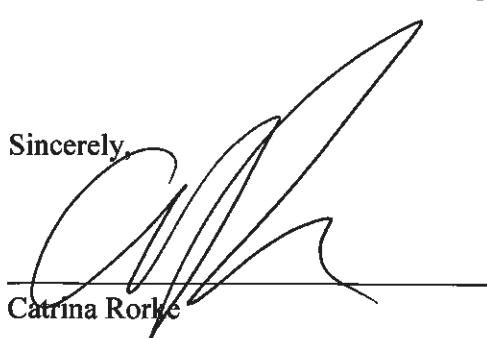
To the specifics of the proposal, I believe that inhabiting the building's lower level will help properly maintain the building while keeping existing tenants in their homes. I understand that to put in new apartments, the applicant is requesting relief from the minimum lot area and parking restrictions. I do not see any significant negative impacts from the Board granting such relief. We are a growing community, and adding new basement units is a great high-density option for bringing in more residents. I'll add that many buildings in the neighborhood are being converted to condos; market-rate rental units provide an opportunity to bring in new residents that might not otherwise afford the area. Though some neighbors will be concerned about parking, part of the charm of this neighborhood is its walkability and access to transit – we're rated as "Very Walkable" by WalkScore.com. Street parking is also more than ample and the applicant will be offering a condition that it will be restricted from obtaining any more street parking permits.

To the contrary, I strongly believe that the exterior and interior renovations proposed by the applicant will be a terrific benefit to my neighbors in and around 2724 11<sup>th</sup> St, NW. I've walked through several versions of proposed renovations with the applicant, and I believe they found a way to improve living conditions and enhance the aesthetic appeal of our neighborhood. I admit to being especially excited that the basement will be a home to new neighbors, rather than a haven for vermin.

I understand and deeply empathize with my neighbors' concerns over the long-term management issues at the apartment building in question. No one in our community doubts that a significant amount of work is needed to make that building comfortable and safe. I believe that the applicant's proposal will quickly improve living conditions for tenants, and, importantly, keep those tenants in their homes. We should all approach this situation with twin goals: the building must be safe and comfortable and remain a home to existing tenants.

I support this application for zoning relief, and I urge the Board to grant the applicant's request.

Sincerely,



Catrina Rorke

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cc: James Turner, ANC 1B Chair and SMD