



## *Where DC Comes Together*

March 6, 2015

LLOYD JORDAN  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT  
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
441 4TH ST NW STE 210S  
WASHINGTON DC 20001

Dear Chairperson Jordan:

Shaw Main Streets, Inc. is pleased to support Douglas Development's Board of Zoning Adjustment application 18905 for relief related to the Gang of Three development at 1216-1226 9<sup>th</sup> Street, NW (Square 368, Lot 174).

As a nonprofit with both historic preservation and economic development in its mission, Shaw Main Streets has spearheaded the neighborhood's renaissance for the past 12 years. We are proud of the dramatic changes we have helped make in central Shaw, several of which have been Douglas Development projects.

The block in question has been one that, until recently, had not enjoyed the level of investment and redevelopment that many others have enjoyed. A number of empty lots and significantly deteriorated historic buildings made it necessary for this block to be one of the last to transition. Now, with several residential and mixed use developments completed and others awaiting construction and underway, the Gang of Three and an infill building in the alley are the last remaining elements awaiting approval.

In undertaking this project, Douglas Development is to be commended for undertaking what other developers would likely have walked away from. The three buildings on the site were in very poor condition, ill-configured and unsuitable for modern use, and the subject of several failed redevelopment schemes proposed by previous owners. The redevelopment of these properties, currently underway, is a tribute to Douglas Development's philosophy of building upon a neighborhood's historic fabric and listening to and delivering on the community's wishes.

The zoning relief sought is justified because the combination of uses proposed by the developer perfectly matches the neighborhood's needs and will complement and support other development on the square and neighboring blocks. By the end of 2016, there will be over 2,000 more units of housing in central Shaw than there were in 2005. Combined with the retention of almost all of the affordable housing in the neighborhood, these new units represent a substantial housing component. Additional housing is not prioritized in the neighborhood's needs. But space for restaurants, specialty bars, and office space are among the most eagerly sought real estate in the area.

Over the course of the past 12 years, Shaw Main Streets has conducted numerous surveys of the types of businesses neighborhood residents are most eager to see open along 7th and 9th Streets, NW. Every poll has indicated that restaurants of all types are the number one most desired business type, with specialty bars in the top 10 preferences.

The demand for small office spaces in central Shaw is high, and there is limited availability and high occupancy. Indeed, Shaw Main Streets has had difficulty finding office space in the neighborhood. Our own office space was

Board of Zoning Adjustment

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District of Columbia

CASE NO.18905

EXHIBIT NO.38

created as a result of the Office of Planning and BZA's instructions to the developer that a floor of proposed residential instead be commercial space, at a time when there was very little demand for office space in the neighborhood. The additional office space created by this project will be not only accommodate new businesses, but will generate additional daytime foot traffic on the block, supporting current and future retail activity.

The restrictions imposed on buildings located in historic districts, like the ones at 1216-1226 9<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, make it both necessary and desirable to maximize the usable square footage available through additions sensitive to the historic fabric, and to waive parking requirements. The costs involved in redeveloping the buildings in question for continued commercial use would be completely prohibitive if the requirement to provide parking for a project on such a small footprint in a historic district is not waived. The BZA recently approved a significant new residential development on the same square with no parking requirement, a much more significant waiver than what is requested for the Gang of Three project.

We would also like to correct information included in the applicant's prehearing statement related to 1240 9<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, cited as an adjacent property. The statement indicates that it "is vacant, but expected to have ground floor retail." The building is currently fully occupied, with a graphic design studio on the second floor and a bar located on the first floor.

Shaw Main Streets and the community are eager to see the Gang of Three project completed and occupied by the types of tenants proposed by the developer. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions related to our support for this project and the zoning application before you.

Sincerely,



Alexander M. Padro  
Executive Director  
Shaw Main Streets, Inc.