STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF AN APPLICATION FOR VARIANCE

PLAZA 8
522-524 Raleigh Street, SE

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OFFICE OF ZONING
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

I. INTRODUCTION

This is an application for a use variance to permit East of the River Community Development Corporation ("ERCDC") to construct a three-story office building in the Congress Heights neighborhood which will be used as offices for ERCDC and other community businesses. The property is located at 522-524 Raleigh Street, SE. This property is currently in two lots, 52 and 53, which are zoned C-2-A and R-5-A, respectively. A Subdivision Application to combine these lots was submitted approximately five weeks ago and approval is expected shortly. This request is for a use variance for lot 53 pursuant to Section 3103 of Title 11 of the D.C. Municipal Regulations (November 1999) (the "Zoning Regulations"). This variance will allow ERCDC to construct one commercial office building on a combined parcel which will be comprised of both the commercially-zoned and residentially zoned lots. Approval of this application will allow ERCDC to expand both its ability to provide services and programs which are beneficial to the community and ERCDC's community economic development and revitalization efforts in Ward 8.

II. EAST OF THE RIVER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

ERCDC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation established to generate economic and community development in Ward 8 in the District of Columbia. The organization is located at 3101 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, SE Washington, DC. The twelve-year old CDC has been an active developer in the Ward, developing both single family and multi-family projects. It has established partnerships with the District of Columbia government, the private sector, and local, grass-roots community groups. In addition to its real estate ventures, ERCDC offers a variety of social programs that assist the residents of Ward 8 including computer training, a micro-loan program and youth-oriented programs. ERCDC also provides technical assistance to local start-ups and established businesses in order to strengthen the business community along the Economic Development Zone corridor.

III. THE SITE

The subject site (see Exhibit C) is located on the north side of Raleigh Street, SE between Parkland Place, SE to the north and Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave., SE to the east, and is known as 522-524 Raleigh St., SE. The site is partially in an R-5-A zone and partially in a C-2-A zone. Across Raleigh Street to the south is an office building and retail along the rest of the block, all in a C-2-A zone. To the west of the site is a 16 foot public alley with a multi-family apartment building in an R-5-A zone on the other side of the alley and single-family homes along the rest of the block. To the north of the site is a Texaco gas station in a C-2-A zone and a non-conforming auto salvage yard in a R-5-A zone. To the

BZA
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Exhibit No. 10

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
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EXHIBIT NO.10

east of the site on the other side of MLK Ave. is a barber shop, some abandoned retail shops, and the old Congress Heights School, all in a C-2-A zoned area.

The entire site is rectangular in shape with a triangular section cut out of the southeast quadrant. The site is topographically level. Currently on the site are two vacant, abandoned apartment buildings that have been a nuisance to the area for years. The buildings are built up right against each other.

IV. NEW CONSTRUCTION

The proposed new office building will be a three-story structure containing approximately 9,400 SF of office space. The proposed building will contain approximately 5,500 SF to be leased to community businesses and 3,900 SF for East of the River's offices. ERCDC's offices will include a large community meeting room, a business resource center for local small businesses to access technology, general office and document storage space for 12 employees, bathrooms, a kitchen, and a community training center.

Pedestrian access to the proposed office building will be from either Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave. or Raleigh Street. Access to the parking area and service and delivery access will be from the public alley to the rear of the building.

V. CONFORMS TO R-5-A DISTRICT

A. Percentage of Lot Occupancy -40% Maximum

Site area:6,270.01 SF x .40 = 2,508 SF ---------- **allowed**

Provided:3,200 SF ---------- **does not conform** ✓

B. FAR allowed ----------.9 allowed

Proposed building: 1.5 FAR (conforms to C-2-A) ---**does not conform** ✓

C. Building Height -3 stories or 40 ft ---------- allowed

Proposed building: 50 ft at entry level ------**does not conform** ✓
(conforms to C-2-A)

D. Side Yard – None required

E. Rear Yard – 20 ft. required

Provided - 30 ft. ---------- **conforms**

VI. PARKING

Under the C-2-A zone, one parking space must be provided for every 600 SF of gross floor area over 2,000 SF. For the proposed office building, 12 parking spaces are required and applicant proposes to provide all 12 spaces. The current apartment buildings on the site contain no parking spaces, but the immediate area contains an abundance of on-street parking during regular office hours.

VII. C-2-A USE VARIANCE

Applicant requests a use variance from the BZA to allow ERCDC to construct a building which conforms to C-2-A zoning to occupy the lot which is zoned R-5-A. As can be seen from Attachment 2, the R-5-A zoned lot is the only lot being used for residential purposes to the north, east and south of the site. Only to the west on Raleigh Street is there residential housing, and it is separated from the site by a 16 foot public alley. Accordingly, allowing the new structure which conforms to C-2-A zoning regulations to occupy the R-5-A zoned lot will not substantially change the character of the surrounding area.

1. Section 3103 (11 DCMR) (November 1999) allows the BZA to grant a variance where:

> "By reason of exceptional topographical condition or other exceptional situation, strict application of the zoning regulations would work a peculiar and exceptional difficulty or undue hardship upon the applicant."

ERCDC'S undue hardship meets this variance approval standard because East of the River desperately needs the extra space to most efficiently and effectively provide services, programs and community development support to the Ward 8 community. Without the variance, East of the River can not justify the cost of an office building. A building built only on the one small lot that is commercially zoned would not contain the amount of office space, conference space and meeting facilities that ERCDC needs, nor would there be enough area to provide the number of parking spaces required under the Zoning Regulations. Furthermore, BZA's grant of a variance to ERCDC will give the Martin Luther King corridor a consistent commercial usage which will improve the ability of Ward 8 to attract and retain retail and office space in southeast D.C. Aesthetically, a new office building on these two lots will fit in perfectly with the surrounding commercial neighborhood and will give the neighborhood the lift it desperately needs.

2. Applicant must also show under Section 3103 that relief can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the integrity of the Zoning Regulations.

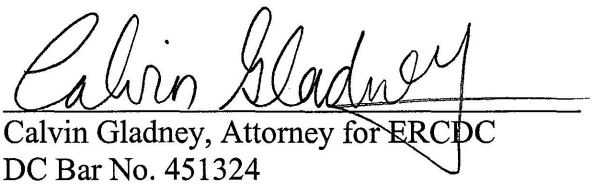
East of the River's new office building, to be known as Plaza 8, will be a breath of fresh air into the Congress Heights community, and will provide much needed office space and expanded business and community facilities to the public. The vacant and abandoned apartment buildings which currently occupy the site are a nuisance and blight

on the neighborhood. The District of Columbia has cleaned and boarded up the properties in the past, but they quickly are littered again and continue to attract drug activity and other undesirable behavior. Redevelopment of these properties will not only remove unsightly properties and prevent potential illegal activity on the site, but will also act as a catalyst to future economic and social growth in the Ward 8 and Congress Heights community.

Attached to this application is a statement of support from Sandy Allen, City Council member for Ward 8.. The proposed Plaza 8 office building also has the full support of the ANC and of all its neighbors. We anticipate that the local ANC and William Lockridge, our local School Board member, will write a letter in support of this application which ERCDC will submit to the BZA as an amendment to this application over the next few weeks. Together with the community, ERCDC will use this new office building to strengthen and revitalize the southeast area of our nation's capital.

For the foregoing reasons, East of the River Community Development Corporation requests approval of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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