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Government of the District of Columbia
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW Suite 210-S
Washington, DC 20001

Subject: Case #17125

Dear Sir or Madam:

On behalf of Krister and Carol Holladay, we write to support their proposal for a rowhouse addition at 507 Independence Ave., SE. Similar to the Holladays, we are a family trying to raise our children in the District of Columbia. As we live on the lot directly east and adjacent to the Holladay's, in a house with virtually the same footprint as theirs, we fully understand the conditions of their hardship. Our family is in fact preparing plans for a similar addition that fills in the dog-leg to alleviate the severely constrained circulation pattern unique to the historic use of our rowhouse so that we may continue to live in our neighborhood.

Our two rowhouses exist in a series of three that were built in the second half of the 19th century. Each house appears the same in both floor plan and architectural style. Each is four rooms deep. The first two span the full width of the lot (about 17 feet), while the back two only partially span the lot (about 12 feet) leaving about a five-foot dog-leg exposed to the sky. Built as boardinghouses, theses structures were intended to host transient guests in the front two rooms, with generously sized sleeping rooms located on the above floors. The kitchen and servants' quarters were reserved for the more austere backrooms of the house, with a secondary stair leading to above sleeping quarters. Thus, the front rooms of these rowhouses are significantly more decorative and better sized than their backroom counterparts, and the front and back of the house was intended to function separately.

While this floor plan ostensibly worked for its historic use as a boardinghouse, it is physically constraining for a family with children. Our rowhouses were specifically built for transient guests, probably for those serving the U.S. Government in some regard, and not families with two and three children. Unlike boardinghouse tenants, who would have used the structure as a means of temporarily shelter and perhaps ate many of their meals out, our families live predominantly on the first floor and function around the kitchen. The location of the kitchen in the fourth room deep from the front of the house severely constrains the circulation and use of space in the back of the house. Excluding circulation, the two back rooms where the kitchen and family/eating space is located are less than eight feet wide, which makes using the rooms for cooking, eating and family gathering extremely difficult and uncomfortable. This constraint becomes more evident as the number of people attempting to use and live in the house increases. The landlocked nature

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of these properties exasperates this condition since the only path to the kitchen is from the front door.

In addition to the physical limitations unique to our properties, the appreciation of real estate in our city precludes the option for moving our families into similarly sized houses as an economic impossibility. The increase in property values that has occurred over the last few years, since we both bought our houses, makes it economically difficult to move. Similarly sized properties in the neighborhood are sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars over and beyond what we can afford.

We fully believe the Holladay's solution for filling in the dog-leg of their house is completely consistent with the purpose and intent of the zoning regulations. The purpose of zoning is to protect the public's welfare. Since the proposed addition only extends to the length of the back of the house and neighboring party wall, and it does not extend vertically above the existing structure, it will not have any impacts on the light and air of neighbors. Given this proposed design, the rear yard will not be affected. We also believe the visual quality of the addition is no more of an issue than any project requiring review in the historic district. Since the exterior space within the existing dog-leg is nearly unusable, the addition will be a more efficient use of land.

In summary, we fully support the Holladay's proposal for a rowhouse addition, and we share their desire to live and raise our children in the District of Columbia. Since our rowhouses are virtually alike in floor plan, we thoroughly understand the nature of their hardship. We believe the constraints unique to our historic floor plans are creating a physical hardship for living and raising our children in our houses. As our children continue to grow, that hardship becomes more pronounced. The reality of the real estate market further creates an economic hardship for moving into a similarly sized house in our neighborhood. Furthermore, the proposed project is not detrimental to the public's welfare and is completely consistent with the purpose and intent of the zoning regulations. Therefore we believe the solution for widening the back room of the house by filling in the dog-leg as a means to alleviate the constrained circulation conditions inherent in the historic floor plans is the only solution that avoids undue physical and economic hardship and allows the Holladay family to remain citizens of Capitol Hill.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call us.

Sincerely,

Marie A. Fennell, AICP Bradley J. Fennell