# Andre F. Houston
## Architect

**Statement in support of Area Variance for 304 Maryland Avenue, NE**

As can be seen from a survey of the block, the subject property is located near the acute angle intersection of Maryland Avenue and 3rd Street. The corner conditions in a row house area such as this sometimes cause some of the lots at or near the corner to be sized considerably smaller and more awkwardly than normal and smaller than their adjacent neighbors. With an acute angle intersection, the geometric problem has forced an even more contorted configuration of lots at this corner, resulting in a particularly short lot for this property. Often in a situation such as this where the lot must be made shorter than normal to accommodate the corner, the lost area is made up by giving the lot a greater width than normal. The subject property, in this case, however, does not enjoy a width greater than its normal adjacent neighbors. As can be seen from the survey, the subject property is the shortest piece of property on this block which is not otherwise compensated for with greater width.

In addition to the its exceptional shallowness and odd shape, this property suffers from another exceptional situation. In order to fit even a small kitchen onto the main living level, a shed, approximately 4' - 6"6' x 6', was appended to the main body of the house. This shed was not well constructed and appears now to be substantially deteriorating. A structural engineer has examined the shed and has concluded that it is structurally questionable and ought to be removed. A copy of his letter on this subject is appended. Consequently, the already shallow house must be made even shallower to eliminate the problematic shed.

Because the lot is unusually shallow, the house is abnormally small, as can be seen by comparing the subject house to the adjacent houses. An addition to the rear, the obvious solution to this problem, would violate the strict application of the Zoning Ordinance, because of percent of lot occupancy and the size of the rear yard. A third room addition, as proposed, would make the house three rooms deep, a configuration which all of the other houses on the block either already enjoy or are permitted to enjoy as a matter of right according to the Zoning Ordinance.

As can be seen from the photographs of the rear of the property and from the survey, the rear yard into which an addition needs to protrude is surrounded on two of the three sides by masonry party walls. Consequently, these properties will not be affected by an addition at all. On the third side, towards the west, the neighboring properties are fortunate in enjoying a large side yard frontage on Third Street, making an addition in the rear yard of the subject property inconsequential to their already generous light and air. In addition, the neighboring property immediately to the west of the subject property will be affected minimally by the proposed addition because the property line slants the

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addition to the east, away from the neighboring west property and out of the direct line of sight of the neighboring west property.

The Owners of the property have circulated a petition in the immediate neighborhood asking the neighbors if they have a problem with this proposed addition. They have already received a positive response from all the neighbors contacted, including the three immediately contiguous neighbors. A copy of the petition will be provided to the file. The Owners will continue to work with citizens groups and the ANC.

Because of the exceptional shallowness and odd shape of this piece of property and because of the extraordinary situation where the rear shed, which contains the kitchen, should be removed, a strict application of the Zoning Ordinance would prevent the Owners from adding a kitchen as a third room, resulting in the undue hardship of not being able to have a proper kitchen and not being able to expand their house to a normal size, as the other houses on the block have already done. Without relief from a strict application of the Zoning Ordinance, the Owners will suffer the practical difficulty of owning a house without a kitchen, and with too little area to work as a normal house, like all of its neighbors.

The granting of this application will not be a substantial detriment to the public good, because as noted above, the neighbors have seen and approved the project and because the addition will be tucked out of the way of the neighbors.

The intent and purpose of the Zoning Regulations in this instance is to provide adequate light and air to the subject property and to the neighbors. The proposed addition is mostly surrounded by blank party walls which cannot take advantage of the light and air provided by this rear yard. The only property which will be in any way affected by this addition will be the neighbor to the immediate west, and the proposed addition is oriented away from that property, so that its light and air are minimally affected, if at all.