



Sep. 18, 2024

Zoning Commission  
District of Columbia  
441 4th Street NW  
Suite 200S  
Washington, DC 20001

*Re: In Support of Board of Zoning Application 21160*

Dear Honorable Members of the District Zoning Commission,

It is with great pleasure that I submit this letter in support of Applicant 21160, The Three Tables LLC, better known to her neighbors as the Ching Ching Cha tea shop and gallery at 1314 21st Street NW.

I have the good fortune to live seven doors down from Ching Ching Cha on Newport Place, where my husband and I have lived for 18 years. In addition to being a neighbor, I am also the Managing Director and Vice President of Government Affairs for the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington.

For more than 100 years, RAMW has advocated and provided a community for over 1,400 entrepreneurs and small businesses in the greater Washington area. We count among our members beloved neighborhood spots, family-owned businesses, homegrown restaurant groups, and national favorites. Together we are one of the largest job creators in the District and leading contributors to revenues.

Before Ching Ching joined our community, the ground floor of 1314 21st Street may have been permitted as an art gallery, but to me it appeared to be a storage unit. A large statue stood in the window, and other artwork could be seen, but no one ever visited. The building was dark and its contents visibly dusty. It's a challenge for me to describe what the prior proprietor used the space for because they had little, if any, engagement with our community.

To my delight and that of my neighbors, Ching Ching Cha's residency has been the refreshing opposite. The applicant has transformed a once-neglected storage space into a beautiful gallery whose walls are lined with handmade teapots, and the gallery is alive with the stories of the artisans who craft them. Outside the gallery, where once unattended and overgrown brush spilled onto our sidewalks, well-loved and cared for gardens frame the gallery and add beauty to our street.

Ching Ching Cha is a cultural ambassador. Fulfilling that role includes tea sales as well as service. This is an appropriate use of a variance. Ching Ching is not seeking to do anything new; pouring tea is a natural extension of the art gallery use.

From my perspective as a longtime small business advocate, I can add that Ching Ching Cha's presence in our community aligns, supports, and lifts up the District's larger mission to re-energize downtown and foster livable, walkable communities where residents can live, work, and play.

Board of Zoning Adjustment  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO.21160  
EXHIBIT NO.472

Ching Ching Cha's transformation of a lifeless storefront stands in stark contrast to another building just down our street, the boarded up 2100 M Street building. This 300,000-square-foot office building has been vacant since 2019, and accompanying that vacancy are all the challenges that come with empty buildings, including in public safety.

Fortunately, we're not here today to discuss an empty structure. Instead, we're asking the Commission to support Ching Ching Cha's simple request to just conduct everyday business.

Ching Ching Cha showcases the multitude of benefits a thriving small business can share with a neighborhood. For that reason, I'm proud to support her application today. Ching Ching Cha is a neighborhood jewel and a kind, considerate, and generous neighbor who I hope is a member of our community for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Che Ruddell-Tabisola'.

Che Ruddell-Tabisola

2130 Newport Place NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Managing Director  
Vice President of Government Affairs  
Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington