

**BEFORE THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT**

**APPLICATION OF  
GEORGE PRESTON RATLIFF AND ALEXANDRA RATLIFF**

**ANC 1C05**

**STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT**

**I. NATURE OF RELIEF SOUGHT**

This statement is submitted on behalf of the Applicant, George Preston Ratliff and Alexandra Ratliff (the “Applicant”), the homeowners of the property located at 2916 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW (Square 2587, Lots 492) (the “Property”), in support of their application for special exception relief, pursuant to Subtitle X § 901.2, from the requirements for lot occupancy (Subtitle E § 304.1) and rear yard (Subtitle E § 306.1) to add a rear deck on their home (the “Project”).

**II. JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD**

The Board of Zoning Adjustment (the “Board”) has jurisdiction to grant the special exception relief requested herein pursuant to Subtitle X § 901.2 of the Zoning Regulations.

**III. BACKGROUND**

**A. The Property and the Surrounding Neighborhood**

The Property is in the RF-1 Zone District with a lot area of 1,790 sq. ft. A copy of the zoning map is attached at **Tab A**. The Property is improved with an attached row home where the Applicant’s reside. To the rear of the Property is a 15-foot-wide alley (the “Alley”). Directly across the Alley is a large property improved with the “Harvard Village” apartment complex. There are several parking spaces for Harvard Village located along the Alley and adjacent to the Property. The Property is not in an historic district.

The Lanier Heights neighborhood is primarily residential in nature. The block where the Property is located – between Summit Place NW and Quarry Road NW – is improved with attached

row homes, but there are several large apartment buildings in the nearby RA-2 zone.<sup>1</sup> Approximately four blocks to the south of the Property is the Adams Morgan neighborhood and commercial corridor on Columbia Road NW. Two blocks to the west of the Property is the National Zoo.

### **B. Traffic Conditions and Mass Transit**

The Property has excellent access to public transportation. There are numerous bus stops on nearby Columbia Road NW, including for lines 42, 43, 90, 96, L2 and the Woodley Park-Adams Morgan circulator. There is also a bus stop for line H2 two blocks from the Property on Harvard Street NW. The Columbia Heights Metrorail Station is approximately half-a-mile from the Property and the Woodley Park Metrorail Station is approximately six-tenths of a mile from the Property. Additionally, there are several Capital Bikeshare stations near the Property. In general, the area is very pedestrian-friendly, as Walkscore.com rates the Property as a “walker’s paradise.”

### **C. The Project**

The Project entails the addition of a one-story deck on the rear of the Applicant’s home. A copy of the Architectural Plans are attached at **Tab B**. The deck will be 11 feet in length by 15’7” in width for a total of 171 square feet. The deck can be accessed from the kitchen on the main level of the Applicant’s home.<sup>2</sup> The Project also incorporates a new stair along the northern lot line, providing egress from the deck to the rear yard. As such, the new stair will also offer rear access to the main level of the Applicant’s home. Currently, there is no stair to the back of the Applicant’s main level. The area below the deck will remain open to the air and would allow a

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<sup>1</sup> The Property was zoned RA-2 until 2016, when the Zoning Commission approved a map amendment under case number 15-09 and re-zoned the block to RF-1.

<sup>2</sup> The Property has two fully above-grade levels, with a cellar level that is accessed only from the rear.

place for parking. The Applicant also proposes a lattice privacy screen on the northern lot line to provide additional privacy along the neighboring property's dog leg.

As a result of the Project, the Property's lot occupancy would increase from the existing 58% to 67.6%, with a maximum of 60% permitted for a row dwelling in the RF-1 zone. The Property's rear yard would decrease from the existing 20 feet to 10.5 feet, where 20 feet is required. As such, the Applicant seeks special exception relief from the standards for both lot occupancy and rear yard.

#### **IV. NATURE OF SPECIAL EXCEPTION RELIEF SOUGHT AND STANDARD OF REVIEW**

The Applicant requests special exception relief pursuant to Subtitle E § 5201.1 from the requirements for lot occupancy and rear yard. Under Subtitle E § 5201.1, the Board may grant special exception relief for an addition to a principal residence. The Applicant seeks relief to increase lot occupancy 7.6% above that permitted in the RF-1. Nonetheless, the proposed lot occupancy of 67.6% is within the Board's authority to grant 70% lot occupancy by special exception. Additionally, the Applicant seeks relief to decrease the rear yard to 10.5 feet, which is 9.5 feet less than the required 20-foot rear yard.

Pursuant to D.C. Code § 6-641.07(g)(2) and 11 DCMR X § 901.2, the Board is authorized to grant a special exception where it finds the special exception:

- (1) Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;
- (2) Will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps; and
- (3) Subject in specific cases to special conditions specified in the Zoning Regulations. 11 DCMR Subtitle X § 901.2.

Relief granted through a special exception is presumed appropriate, reasonable, and compatible with other uses in the same zoning classification, provided the specific requirements

for the relief are met. In reviewing an application for special exception relief, “[t]he Board’s discretion . . . is limited to a determination of whether the exception sought meets the requirements of the regulation.” *President & Dirs. of Georgetown College v. D.C. Bd. of Zoning Adjustment*, 837 A.2d 58, 68 (D.C. 2003); *see also Stewart v. District of Columbia Bd. of Zoning Adjustment*, 305 A.2d 516, 518 (D.C. 1973)). If the applicant meets its burden, the Board must ordinarily grant the application. *Id.*

**V. APPLICANT MEETS BURDEN FOR SPECIAL EXCEPTION RELIEF**

**A. The Relief is Harmonious with the General Purpose and Intent of the Zoning Regulations and Maps**

The special exception relief will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and related maps. The Project will further the single-family residential use of the Applicant’s home in accordance with the purpose and intent of the RF-1 zone. *See* Subtitle E § 100.3(a). The Applicant will be able to better enjoy the use of the outdoor space in the back of their home, which has become particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the Project is designed to provide a safe and accessible area for the Applicant and their family to gather. To that end, the Applicant has vulnerable, live-in family members that otherwise could not safely access or use a smaller deck.

Additionally, the requested lot occupancy relief is within the special exception standard of 70%, and although the rear yard will be decreased, the ground level under the deck will remain open to light and air.

**B. The Relief Will Not Tend to Adversely Affect the Use of Neighboring Property**

The Project will not adversely affect the use of neighboring properties, including as to light, air and privacy. The deck will be open on the ground level and, therefore, the deck will maintain light and air in and around the Property. In this respect, the Project will not present like a structural

expansion of the home. The 15-foot-wide Alley and open green space across the Alley with further ensure limited impacts in terms of light and air for neighboring properties.

With regard to privacy, the Applicant proposes a lattice along the northern lot line to shield any views into the neighboring property's dog leg. There is also an existing fence and three evergreen trees on the northern lot line to further limit impacts to privacy. Nonetheless, the homes on 18<sup>th</sup> Street generally have short back yards that are used for parking purposes. Therefore, the deck will not be overlooking space on neighboring lots that is used for gathering and socialization, but, rather, other parking spaces.

Importantly, the Applicant has obtained a letter of support from the neighbor that shares the southern lot line with the Property. As stated, the neighbor does not believe the Project will adversely impact his property. The Applicant has also obtained support from a neighbor two lots to the north of the Property. The letters of support are attached at **Tab C**. The Applicant will continue outreach to other neighbors.

### **C. The Project Satisfies the Special Conditions of Subtitle E § 5201.4**

In addition to the general special exception standard, the Project satisfies the special conditions for an addition in the RF-1 zone pursuant to Subtitle E § 5201.4, as follows:

- 1. The light and air available to neighboring properties shall not be unduly affected;*

As outlined above, the open nature of the deck design will minimize impacts to light and air for neighboring properties. Although it is a “structure” under the Zoning Regulations, the deck does not have walls and is open on the ground level. Thus, the Project will have limited impact in terms of shadowing and restrictions to air flow around the Property. The 15-foot-wide Alley and open green space across at the “Harvard Village” across the Alley will further minimize impacts to light and air.

2. *The privacy and use and enjoyment of neighboring properties shall not be unduly comprised;*

The Project will not unduly comprise the privacy and enjoyment of neighboring properties. As noted, the homes fronting on 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW have small rear yards that are primarily used for parking purposes. Therefore, the Project will not impact the privacy and use of neighboring back yards, since they are generally not used for recreation or socializing.

Further, the Applicant proposes a privacy lattice on the northern lot line, in addition to maintaining the existing evergreen trees and fencing. The neighboring property to the south has signed a letter of support, which states no expected adverse impacts from the Project. See **Tab C**.

3. *The proposed addition or accessory structure, together with the original building, as viewed from the street, alley, and other public way, shall not substantially visually intrude upon the character, scale and pattern of houses along the subject street or alley frontage;*

The Project is consistent with the character, scale and pattern of homes along 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW and the Alley. The Project will not alter the frontage of the Property on 18<sup>th</sup> Street. On the Alley side, several of the neighboring homes have their own decks, including the property directly to the north. Therefore, the Project is consistent with the pattern of development on the Alley. In terms of character and scale, the ground level will remain open to the air, and the Project will maintain a 10.5-foot setback from the Alley. In conjunction with the 15-foot-wide Alley and the open courtyard space across the Alley, the Project will not substantially intrude on the character or scale of neighboring homes.

4. *In demonstrating compliance with paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this subsection, the applicant shall use graphical representations such as plans, photographs, or elevation and section drawings sufficient to represent the relationship of the proposed addition or accessory structure to adjacent buildings and views from public ways;*

The architectural plans attached to this statement comply with this condition by providing plans, elevations and section drawings to depict the deck in relation to neighboring properties and public ways.

**IV. COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

In accordance with ANC 1C's procedures and guidelines, the Applicant contact ANC 1C after the application is filed. The Applicant will formally present the application to ANC 1C at its next available public meeting.

**V. CONCLUSION**

For the reasons stated above, the Project meets the applicable standards for special exception relief under the Zoning Regulations. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests the Board grant the application.

Respectfully Submitted,

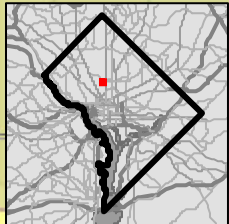
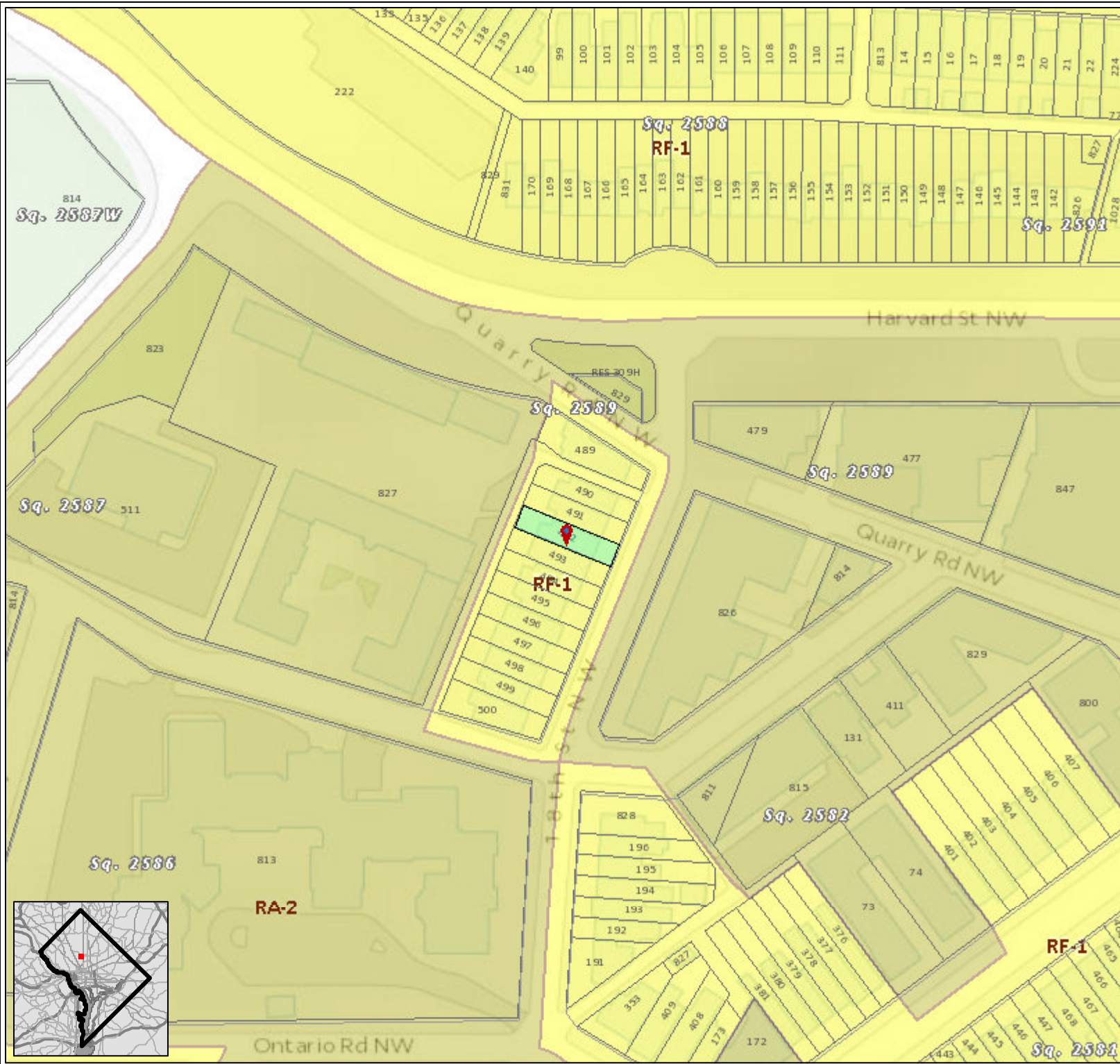
COZEN O'CONNOR



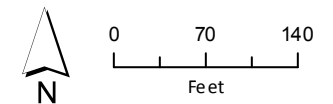
Eric J. DeBear  
1200 19<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036

**Tab A**





## Zoning Map of the District of Columbia

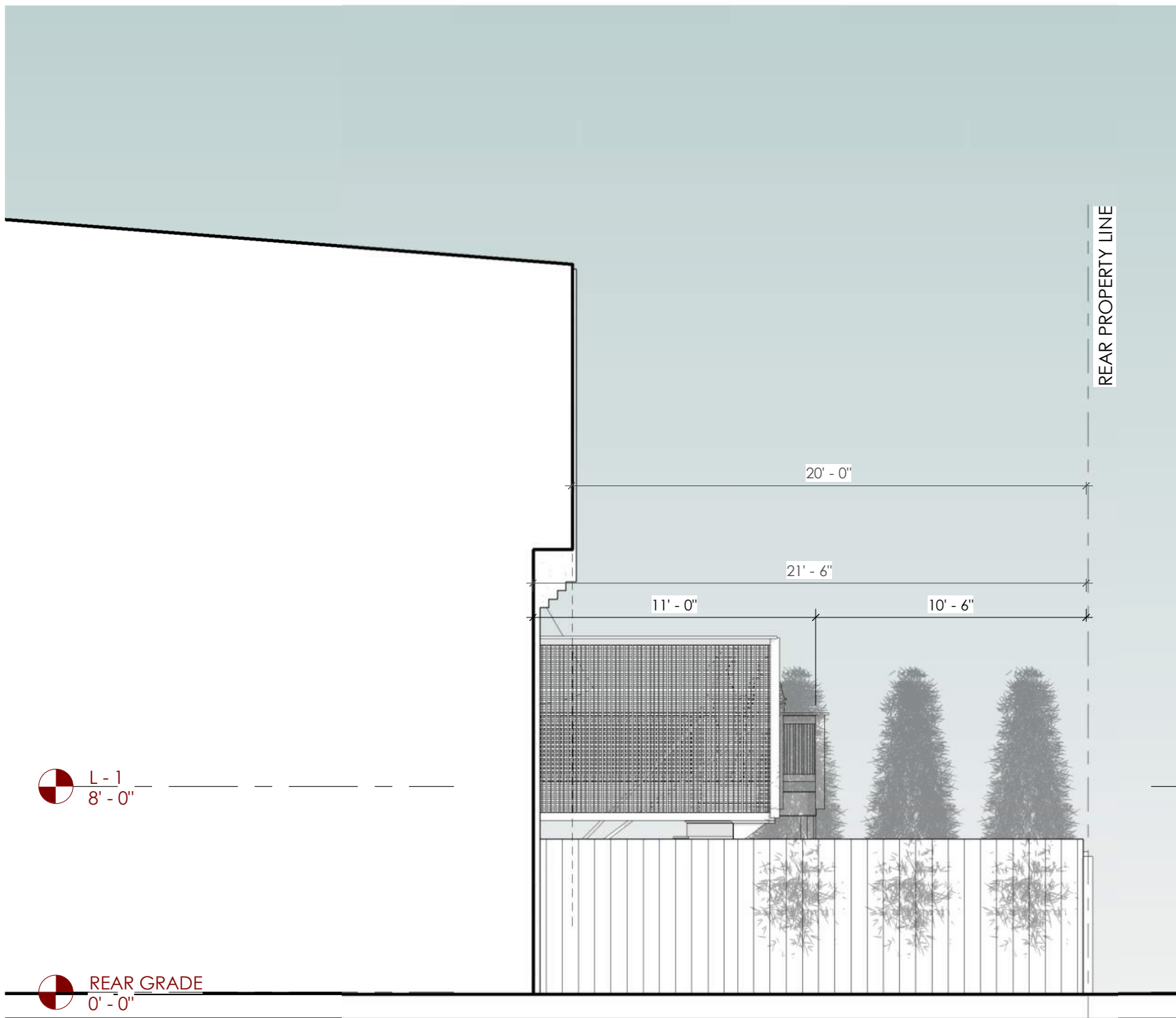


Extracted from Online Zoning Information published by the District of Columbia Office of Zoning, DCGIS, and Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO). Exported on: 6/16/2021

To certify zoning on any property in order to satisfy a legal requirement, contact the office of Zoning at the address listed below.

District of Columbia Office of Zoning,  
441 4th St NW, Suite 200 South, Washington, DC 20001  
202-727-6311 | dcoz@d.c.gov

**Tab B**



BZA - SIDE ELEVATION



BZA - REAR ELEVATION

# RATLIFF DECK

2916 18TH STREET NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20009

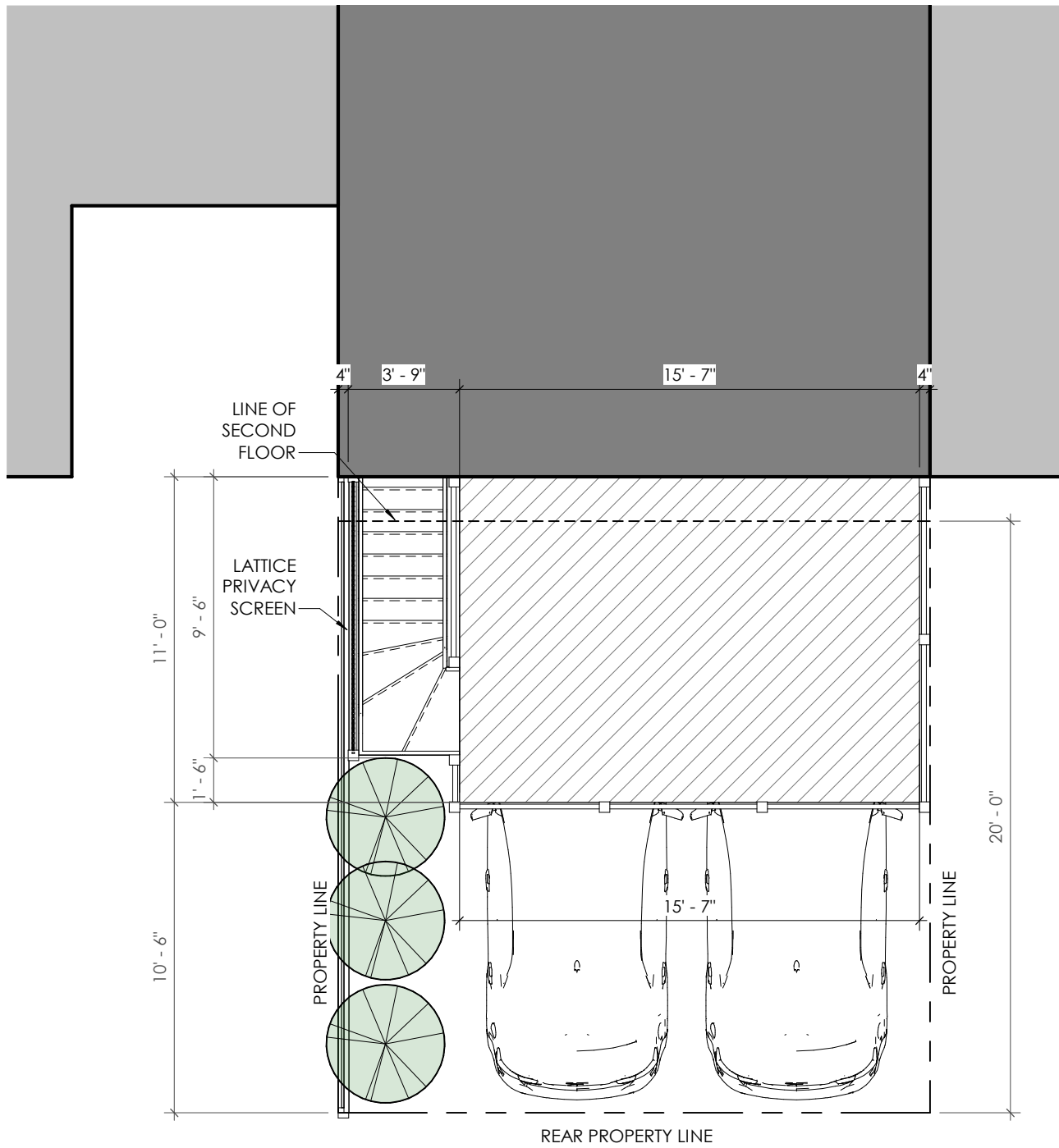
No.	Description	Date

## DECK DRAWINGS

Project number    Project Number  
Date                    05/26/2021  
LOT:                    2587  
SQUARE:                0492

**DK1**

Scale 3/16" = 1'-0"



1 DECK PLAN  
DK2 3/16" = 1'-0"

ALLEY VIEW

# RATLIFF DECK

2916 18TH STREET NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20009

No.	Description	Date

DECK DETAILS		DK2
Project number	Project Number	
Date	05/26/2021	
LOT:	2587	
SQUARE:	0492	
Scale 3/16" = 1'-0"		

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT  
OFFICE OF THE SURVEYOR**

Washington, D.C., December 23, 2019

Plat for Building Permit of: **SQUARE 2587 LOTS 491 - 493**

Scale: 1 inch = 20 feet

Recorded in Book 75 Page 12

Receipt No. 20-01706 Drawn by: A.S.

Furnished to: **MELVIN CRENSHAW**


I hereby certify that on this plat on which the Office of the Surveyor has drawn the dimensions of this lot, I have accurately and completely depicted and labeled the following:

- 1) all existing buildings and improvements - including parking spaces, covered porches, decks and retaining walls over four feet above grade, and any existing face-on-line or party wall labeled as such, well as projections and improvements in public space - with complete and accurate dimensions;
- 2) all proposed demolition or raze of existing buildings duly labeled as such; all proposed buildings and improvements - including parking spaces, covered porches, decks and retaining walls over four feet above grade, any existing face-on-line or party wall labeled as such, as well as projections and improvements in public space and the improvements used to satisfy pervious surface or green area ratio requirements - with complete and accurate dimensions, in conformity with the plans submitted with building permit application T.B.D.; and
- 3) any existing chimney or vent on an adjacent property that is located within 10 feet of this lot.

I also hereby certify that:

- 1) my depiction on this plat, as detailed above, is accurate and complete as of the date of my signature hereon;
- 2) there is no elevation change exceeding ten feet measured between lot lines; or if so, this elevation change is depicted on a site plan submitted with the plans for this permit application;
- 3) I ~~have~~ have not (circle one) filed a subdivision application with the Office of the Surveyor;
- 4) I ~~have~~ have not (circle one) filed a division of lots application with the Office of Tax & Revenue; and
- 5) if there are changes to the lot and its boundaries as shown on this plat, or to the proposed construction and plans as shown on this plat, that I shall obtain an updated plat from the Office of the Surveyor on which I will depict all existing and proposed construction and which I will then submit to the Office of the Zoning Administrator for review and approval prior to permit issuance.

Plats issued by the Office of the Surveyor will be valid for a period of two years from the date of issuance. I acknowledge that any inaccuracy or errors in my depiction on this plat will subject any permit or certificate of occupancy issued in reliance on this plat to enforcement, including revocation under Sections 105.6(1) and 110.5.2 of the Building Code (Title 12A of the DCMR) as well as prosecution and penalties under Section 404 of D.C. Law 4-164 (D.C. Official Code §22-2405).

Signature:  Date: 5/28/2021

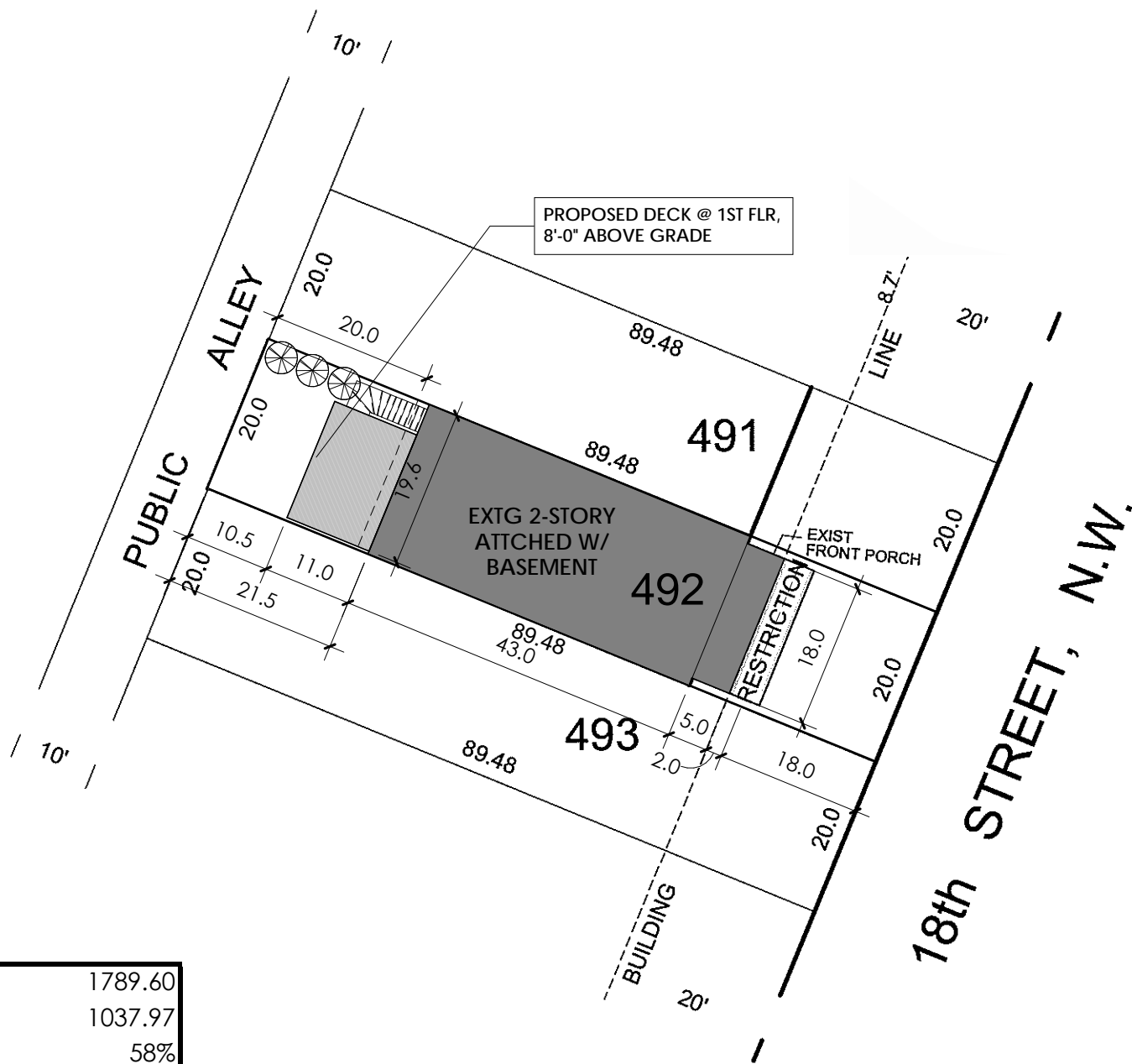
Printed Name: PAUL DUPNICK Relationship to Lot Owner: AGENT

If a registered design professional, provide license number \_\_\_\_\_ and include stamp below.

"I hereby certify that the dimensions and configuration of the lot(s) hereon depicted are consistent with the records of the Office of the Surveyor unless otherwise noted, but may not reflect actual field measurements. The dimensions and configuration of A&T lots are provided by the Office of Tax and Revenue and may not necessarily agree with the deed description(s)."

Anup Shrestha

A.S. Surveyor, D.C.



LOT:	1789.60
BLDG:	1037.97
EXTG OCCUP:	58%
DECK:	171
OCCUP:	9.6%
TOTAL OCCUP.	67.6%
EXTG REAR SETBACK	20'
DECK REAR SETBACK	10.5'



SCALE: 1:20

Tab C

Board of Zoning Adjustment  
Frederick L. Hill, Chairperson  
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200S  
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Letter of Support for 2916 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW

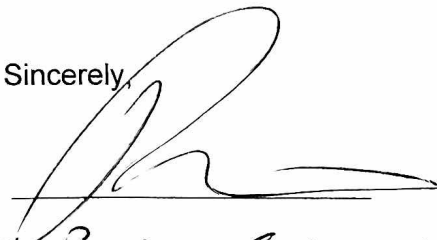
Dear Chairman Hill and Members of the Board,

I own the property at 2914 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW. I have spoken with Alex and Preston Ratliff about their plans to build a new deck on the back of their home. We reviewed their plans and also discussed the zoning relief request from the requirements for lot occupancy and rear yard.

I am writing to offer my full support for this application. I am familiar with the property, which is right next to mine, and Alex and Preston have answered my questions. The proposed deck is a reasonable size and I do not believe it will cause any adverse impact to my property or neighboring properties. The deck is also compatible with the homes on 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW, many of which have back decks facing the alley.

Overall, the proposed project will serve as a great addition to the neighborhood and provide more housing opportunities. Therefore, I recommend the Board approve the zoning relief and allow the building process to move forward. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



6-15-21

Name (printed): RICARDO SAAVEDRA

Address: 2914 18<sup>th</sup> ST NW, DC

Board of Zoning Adjustment  
Frederick L. Hill, Chairperson  
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200S  
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Letter of Support for 2916 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW

Chairman Hill and Members of the Board,

I own the home at 2920 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW Unit A. Preston Ratliff and his wife Alex have made me aware of their plans to build a new deck on the rear of their home.

As part of the process, he and his wife have provided me their architectural plans and informed us of their request for zoning relief for lot occupancy on the rear yard. The proposed deck will not cause any adverse impact to my property or the properties of my neighbors. And the deck is a reasonable size. Thus I am writing this letter to offer my full support for their application

I recommend the Board approve the zoning relief and allow the building process to move forward. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
Matthew Radomski 6/17/2021  
B1FF24043040416...

Matthew Radomski

2920 18<sup>th</sup> St NW Unit A