

March 2, 2018

Mr. Frederick L. Hill, Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20002

RE: Support for BZA #19705 – 2114 14th Street, NW – Martha’s Table site, request for relief in order to construct a new mixed use building, Madison Investments, applicant

Dear Chairperson Hill and Members of the Board:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization in the Washington, DC region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish.

We are pleased to express our support for this carefully designed project that retains the look and feel of the historic street frontage of nearly an entire block of 14th Street. The project offers a welcome addition of approximately 242 new homes in a growing and popular neighborhood. It’s close to major bus lines, Metro stations, and within walking distance of hundreds of thousands of downtown jobs. Many grocery stores and other services are nearby. In short, this is a terrific place to add new housing opportunities.

I’m personally familiar with the site because I’ve lived a block away from the site since 2000. So I am excited both as a supporter of smart growth and a nearby neighbor to welcome this thoughtful adaptation and transformation of this block.

We commend the proposed building for the many good use and design decisions. It provides a thoughtful integration of historic structures into a new, larger, mix of uses. Using the ground floor for retail is the right approach as well. Adding a small office component offers an interesting mix of uses that is less common. The use of the alley for an office entrance from V Street animates more sides to the building and is an intriguing and beneficial use. The off-street parking is reasonable, only exceeding the minimum required by a few spaces. Given how walk-, bike- and transit-accessible this neighborhood is, less parking would be appropriate, but the proposed level is reasonable.

One design element that concerns us is the revised plan to provide a curb cut and driveway on W Street, even though the site is accessible from a 15-foot alley. We concur with DDOT that the curb cut and driveway are unnecessary and undesirable. Consolidating incursions across the public sidewalk is a great benefit of this redevelopment and is supported by the alley which provides necessary vehicular access. Pedestrians are best served by restricting vehicle access to the alley. Careful design can foster safe interactions in the alley between vehicles and pedestrians. But making the alley more pedestrian-friendly, is not an argument for providing an unnecessary curb cut and driveway across the W Street sidewalk.

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At the outset, the developer said that it would comply with the Inclusionary Zoning regulations, and that the level it owed was 10% set aside at 60% median family income. Upon further investigation, it appears that the zoning rules for the zone require only an 8% set aside. We would prefer, of course, if the developer were willing to exceed the IZ requirement and offer 10% for a neighborhood where housing prices are rising far out of the reach of low and moderate-income households.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl Cort". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "C" and "A" at the end.

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director