

Testimonial for BZA Hearing

Matthew Foust

2612 17<sup>th</sup> St NE, Washington, D.C. 20018

Chairman Hill and Members of the Board - Thank you for hearing this testimonial. I am a community organizer and a neighbor who has taken the lead on restoring the Langdon Park Community Association to find ways to better support our neighborhood through community engagement, supporting our local businesses, and improving the safety and aesthetics of our community. I speak today for myself, but only after seeking feedback from my friends and neighbors.

I participated in a town hall meeting regarding the application for 1400 Montana Avenue on March 14<sup>th</sup> and felt compelled to lend a voice of support to the efforts. I am in favor of providing zoning relief for the proposed 108-unit apartment building and allowing the development to move forward. I see this development as an opportunity to continue to invest in the growth and improvement of our community.

As a professional community manager, I have come to understand that the two most critical aspects of a successful community are ensuring the safety of the residents and that amenities are readily available. I have held many conversations with my neighbors and believe there is agreement that this applies as much to our area of Rhode Island Avenue as it does anywhere else.

Our community is starved for amenities. An increase in population would support a revitalization of Rhode Island Avenue. Positive, aesthetics-enhancing

development; as proposed by MCFI; will also promote this. Our money should stay in our immediate community – and we need more opportunity for local businesses to form and for us to support them.

I hope I may speak on behalf of all our neighbors when I say that we are concerned for our safety. Many of us are supporting an effort to bring mediators to the community, an effort instigated by the proprietors of MCFI. Shootings, car jackings – including one involving the kidnapping of a toddler and the abandoning of that vehicle in front of my house – and petty crime are far too often an occurrence in our neighborhood. We appreciate MCFI's good faith efforts, and consider it going above and beyond what is necessary of them.

I would also like to share my concerns regarding the process for review of this development by the ANC. I attended the last hearing of the BZA regarding this issue and a commitment was made to hold forums for the development at the SMD and ANC Ward 5 community discussions. I shared information about the SMD meeting on NextDoor (social media) to encourage the community to attend and share their sentiments. Our representatives, however, attempted to cancel and did not post notice until the day of the event and only to a portion of the community, obstructing community engagement. I also attended the Ward 5 ANC meeting, where the council chair refused to add the event to the agenda, refusing to provide a reason for not doing so and defying the commitments made by our Commissioner and our neighboring Commissioner at the last BZA meeting. They did, however, add several other issues to the agenda that were not included when the agenda was posted to the ANC website earlier in the week, showing they were willing to hear new business, just not the business that a number of us

attended the meeting to discuss. I am concerned about the unwillingness of our community leaders to allow proper forum for this development, but I cannot fault the developer for this and you should not either.

I would like it to be known that I do not seek to divide interests in our community by supporting this development. I believe my neighbors here today who contest this development share my concerns about the economic success and safety of our neighborhood. It is my feeling that this vision is best supported by activity that invites new faces and voices to contribute to these efforts, while providing additional housing that is available to all. I believe this effort is furthered through development plan for 1400 Montana Ave, which is why I support it.

Thank you all for your time.

With Respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matthew Foust". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "With Respect," text.

Matthew Foust

2612 17<sup>th</sup> St NE

Washington, D.C. 20018