



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E

Representing the communities of Burleith, Georgetown, and Hillandale

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July 15, 2019

Mr. Frederick Hill
Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001
bzasubmissions@dc.gov

**Re: BZA Case Number 20061 – 1353-1355 Wisconsin Avenue NW -
Letter of Support for Relief for Location of Non-Residential FAR**

Dear Chairperson Hill,

On July 1, 2019, ANC 2E held its regularly scheduled public meeting, which was properly noticed and attended by six commissioners, constituting a quorum. At that meeting, ANC 2E voted 6-0-0 in support of the above referenced application for a variance relief.

When the members of ANC 2E considered the pending application, they were already very familiar with the Applicant's plans to rehabilitate the two subject buildings, which are located in what could fairly be described as a blighted block in the heart of Georgetown's commercial core. The Applicant has worked with the ANC and the community throughout the planning of this project, including the historic preservation concept review. ANC 2E fully supports the proposed development, including conversion of the property's third floor from residential to office use. Rehabilitation of the two buildings would be an important first step in the renewal of the Wisconsin Avenue corridor in our community.

Given the unique characteristics of the property — including, the small, constrained floor plates, the narrow structures, the pre-existing historic fabric of the two rowhouses, the existing commercial uses, low degree of efficiency, and the vacant and deficient residential space within the property — the property easily meets the exceptional condition criterion of the variance test. Further, given such characteristics, there would be a practical difficulty if the variance were not approved. Providing residential use on the third floor of the project will result in less desirable rentable areas for office tenants, likely restricting the ability for the owner to find an office tenant, along with creating operational challenges that will further degrade the space, such as shared or duplicative access, and security issues. In addition, strict compliance would strain the project's efficiency (which is already low due to the property's historic fabric) as the result of elements such as introducing multiple access points and hallways, duplicative systems and other

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similar site challenges. Further, any residential units on the third floor would not be desirable due to tight configurations and diminished light and air.

Opportunities such as this for additional commercial, specifically office, use on underutilized property along the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, particularly at its southern end, are welcome additions to the area. The ANC recognizes the importance of bringing an office use to this location, including the third floor of the property, in order to enhance the mixed use nature of the neighborhood. Importantly, the office use as proposed will stimulate additional daytime foot traffic along the corridor. This is a key goal for the ANC; the number of vacant buildings along this stretch of Wisconsin Avenue is perhaps the most critical problem we currently face. For too long this corridor has suffered from a lack of investment, in part due to a loss of daytime pedestrian activity. That being the case, the ANC supports office instead of other uses for the second and third floors of this property.

Furthermore, we note that there is ample existing residential space and new residential space being built in the immediate vicinity of the project. In fact, the applicant itself included new residential units in an MU-4 building immediately to the south of the subject building.

For all of these reasons, ANC 2E supports the application for variance relief and urges the Board to approve the application.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard G. Murphy, Jr." in a cursive script.

Rick Murphy
Chair, ANC 2E