



Zoning Board of Adjustment
Concourse, Municipal Services Building
15th and JFK Boulevard
Philadelphia, PA 19102

April 10, 2018

Re: Opposition to Appeal #33078, Permit #834167, District Council #2

(For the creation of one (1) open air accessory off street surface parking space in the rear yard of the lot with ingress and egress from Porter street.)

Dear Zoning Board Members,

The applicant in this appeal appeared before a meeting of the coordinating RCO, Girard Estate Area Residents (GEAR), on Tuesday, April 10, 2018, at which the GENA zoning committee participated. The applicant is requesting a variance to place a parking space in the rear yard of 2501 South 19th Street.

The permit was refused by the Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I) on the basis that *In accordance with title 14-803(1)(b)(.1)(a)(.ii) surface parking spaces are prohibited in required front, side and rear yards.*

GENA Agrees with L&I and sees no reason to support this appeal for the following reasons:

No Hardship: Applicant did not show that any hardship required creation of a backyard parking space. Parking is at a premium in the neighborhood, but this is a shared condition in no way special to the applicant.

Bad Public Policy: We believe supporting this variance request would not be in the best interest of the community. In effect, the granting of special variances to convert yard space into parking creates a situation that privatizes the public right-of-way by converting scarce parking spaces into dedicated driveways. The common wisdom is that this is a one-for one swap, but the real effect is to set aside a common resource for private use. Unlike a handicapped spot, which is at-need and temporary, a variance like this is permanent. Despite verbal assurances by the applicants, undoubtedly well-meant, experience has shown that nothing prevents the recipient of such a benefit from reverting the backyard to ordinary use and merely using the created driveway as a personal, on-street, parking space.

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Girard Estate Neighbors Association
Providing a voice for the community.

Other Considerations:

If the city insists on granting such variances, it should require that the paved spaces that replace the existing back yards should provide a permeable surface in accordance with current best practices for water runoff, such as are described in the Philadelphia Water Department's Rain Check Program.

Sincerely,

Paul Rossi, Chair, Girard Estate Neighbors Association Zoning Committee

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