

OPENING STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF ACCESSORY STRUCTURE VARIANCE

Final Proposed Size: 11' x 16' (176 sq ft)
Address: 19118 Mitchell Ave, Rocky River, OH
Applicant: Christopher Sbrocco

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present my request this evening. I appreciate the time, guidance, and feedback provided by the City and the Variance Committee throughout this process.

Since my initial submission, I have made multiple revisions specifically to **reduce the overall footprint** of the proposed accessory structure and to respond directly to the Committee's concerns. The structure was originally proposed at **14' x 18'**, then reduced to **14' x 17'**, and is now proposed at **11' x 16'**, bringing the total area to **176 square feet** and placing it **below the 180-square-foot threshold**.

The current **11' x 16'** size represents the absolute minimum practical footprint necessary to safely store normal residential, seasonal, and maintenance-related household items. This size was not selected arbitrarily; it is driven entirely by the physical dimensions of the items being stored and the need for safe access, circulation, and organization.

Items Requiring Storage and Space Consideration

The accessory structure is intended **solely for residential storage**, including the following typical household items:

- Outdoor sectional furniture, approximately **9' x 7'**
- Patio dining table, approximately **6' x 3'**
- Patio dining chairs (6), approximately **2' x 2' each**, stacked
- Propane patio heaters (2), approximately **7' tall x 2' diameter**
- Walk-behind lawn mower, approximately **5' x 3'**
- Snowblower, approximately **3' x 2'**
- Wheelbarrow, approximately **5' x 2.5'**
- Gas cans (2-3), approximately **1' x 1' each**
- Workbench, approximately **7-8' x 2.5'**
- Tool chest and tool storage, approximately **4' x 2'**
- Wall shelving units, approximately **3' x 1.5' each**
- Ladders and long tools, **6-8' in length**
- Bicycles (2-3), approximately **6' x 2' each**
- Sports and seasonal equipment stored in bins
- Household storage totes (10-15), approximately **2' x 1.5' each**

- Holiday decorations and seasonal items
- Spare lumber and materials up to **8' in length**

Many of these items cannot be safely stacked or stored outdoors without damage, safety concerns, or visual clutter. Fuel-powered equipment requires clear access and separation. Outdoor furniture alone occupies nearly **100 square feet** and must remain intact to avoid damage.

The **11-foot width** is required to allow wall-mounted storage, a clear access path, and a functional storage zone without obstructing circulation. The **16-foot depth** is necessary for door swing clearance, rolling equipment, and access to stored items without unsafe stacking or obstruction.

Neighborhood and Aesthetic Considerations

All adjacent neighbors have **expressed support and signed off** on both the proposed size and setbacks. The structure will be designed to **match and complement** the existing home and garage and will be visually unobtrusive.

The lot is **large enough to accommodate this structure**, and the proposed shed represents only a small percentage of total lot coverage, well within zoning limits. Consolidating storage into an enclosed structure will result in a **cleaner, safer, and more visually appealing property**, particularly during the winter months when items would otherwise be stored outdoors.

Preservation of a Century Home

The home on this property is over **100 years old** and has been carefully maintained to preserve its original character and architectural integrity. I would strongly prefer **not to construct an addition onto a century-old home** simply to store household items. An addition would be far more disruptive, more visually impactful, and inconsistent with the character of both the home and the neighborhood.

Constructing a modest, well-designed accessory structure is the **least intrusive and most responsible solution**.

Closing

I have taken significant steps to reduce the size, increase setbacks, work collaboratively with the City, and address all concerns raised. I believe this request is **reasonable, modest, and fully aligned with the intent of the zoning code**.

I am not asking for anything outside of what is normal for residential storage needs

—only the **minimum space necessary** to store household items safely, neatly, and respectfully.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

— Christopher Sbrocco

1. Description of What Is Intended to Be Done

Construction of a small accessory structure (shed) in the rear corner of the backyard. The structure will be supported by 6x6 posts on proper footings and will be used for general residential storage and outdoor recreation purposes. The overall height is approximately 10 feet.

2. Sections of the Code Variance Is Being Requested

The variance being requested relates to setback requirements for accessory structures in residential districts. The proposed shed is located closer to the property line than the required minimum setback distance.

3. Property Lines

The shed is being placed in the rear corner of the lot. One side of the shed is approximately 3 feet from the property line, and the adjacent side is approximately 3 feet from the property line.

4. List of Variances Requested

- Rear yard setback variance: To allow the accessory structure to be placed approximately 3.5 feet from the rear property line, where the zoning code requires a larger setback.
- Side yard setback variance: To allow the accessory structure to be placed approximately 3.5 feet from the side property line, where the zoning code requires a larger setback.

Practical Difficulties

A. Describe the conditions and circumstances particular to this property

The property is a typical residential lot in Rocky River with limited backyard space. The rear corner of the yard is the only practical location for a small accessory shed without interfering with existing driveways, utilities, or the use of the home's main yard. The location near the lot line makes efficient use of space and preserves open yard area for daily use.

B. Reasonable return / beneficial use without variance

Without the variance, the property could not accommodate even a small, code-compliant accessory structure without consuming the middle of the usable backyard, which would significantly limit family use and enjoyment. The variance allows a reasonable return by permitting standard backyard storage/recreation that is common for other homeowners.

C. Substantiality and minimum necessary variance

The requested variance is minimal — the structure is located approximately 3.5 feet from the rear property line and 3.5 feet from the side property line instead of the standard setback. This deviation is small and represents the minimum necessary to make the structure workable in the corner of the lot.

D. Character of neighborhood / adjoining properties

The shed will not substantially alter the character of the neighborhood. Similar accessory structures exist on nearby properties, some at comparable distances to property lines. The design is modest, residential in character, and will not cause detriment to adjoining properties. In fact, the finished structure will increase the overall appearance and value of the property and blend with surrounding improvements.

E. Government services

The variance will not negatively affect the delivery of government services. The shed will not interfere with water, sewer, drainage, or trash pickup. No utilities are being altered, and there will be no obstruction of easements.

F. Knowledge of zoning restrictions

The property was purchased with the reasonable expectation that standard residential improvements like a small shed could be added. The specific setback requirement was not known to the owner at the time the structure was started.

G. Actions of the owner

The placement of the shed in the corner was chosen to maximize open yard space and minimize impact on the neighbors or street view. While this decision led to a closer placement to the property line, it was not intended to bypass regulations but to make the most efficient use of the lot.

H. Other methods

Other placement methods on the property would significantly obstruct the primary backyard space, interfere with play areas, or require removal of landscaping. The variance is the only practical way to allow the improvement without unreasonably limiting use of the property.

I. Spirit and intent of zoning

The spirit of the zoning code — to maintain orderly setbacks and protect neighbors — will still be observed. The structure is small, residential in scale, and will not obstruct light, air, or views. Granting this variance does substantial justice by allowing a typical accessory use without harm to the neighborhood.

J. Special privilege

The variance does not confer a special privilege. Other properties in the district have similar small accessory structures. The request only allows this property owner the same enjoyment and utility that others in the neighborhood already have.

K. Deprivation of rights

Literal enforcement of the code would deprive the applicant of the common right to have a small backyard accessory structure for storage/recreation. Many other homeowners in the same district enjoy this right, and the variance simply places this property on equal footing.

Unnecessary Hardship Standard

i.) Condition unique to the property

The hardship stems from the configuration of the lot and the placement of existing improvements, which leave only the rear corner as a practical location for a small accessory structure. This circumstance is unique to this property and not ordinarily found in other lots within the zoning district.

ii.) Effect on adjacent property owners

Granting the variance will not materially adversely affect the rights of adjacent property owners. The structure is modest in size and height, consistent with other sheds and accessory buildings in the neighborhood. It does not block views, restrict light or air, or otherwise impact neighbors' reasonable use of their property.

iii.) Effect on public health, safety, welfare

The variance will not have any adverse effect on public health, safety, or general welfare. The structure does not interfere with utilities, drainage, or city services, and will be constructed to safe building standards.

iv.) Spirit and intent of the code

The intent of the zoning code is to protect neighborhood character and maintain adequate separation between structures. The proposed shed is consistent in scale with other accessory uses, will not alter the residential character of the area, and therefore the spirit and intent of the code is preserved.

v.) Minimum necessary variance

The variance requested is the minimum necessary to afford relief. The shed is approximately 3.5 feet from the rear property line and 3.5 feet from the side property line, a small deviation from the required setbacks. Relocating the structure further inward would substantially reduce usable yard area.

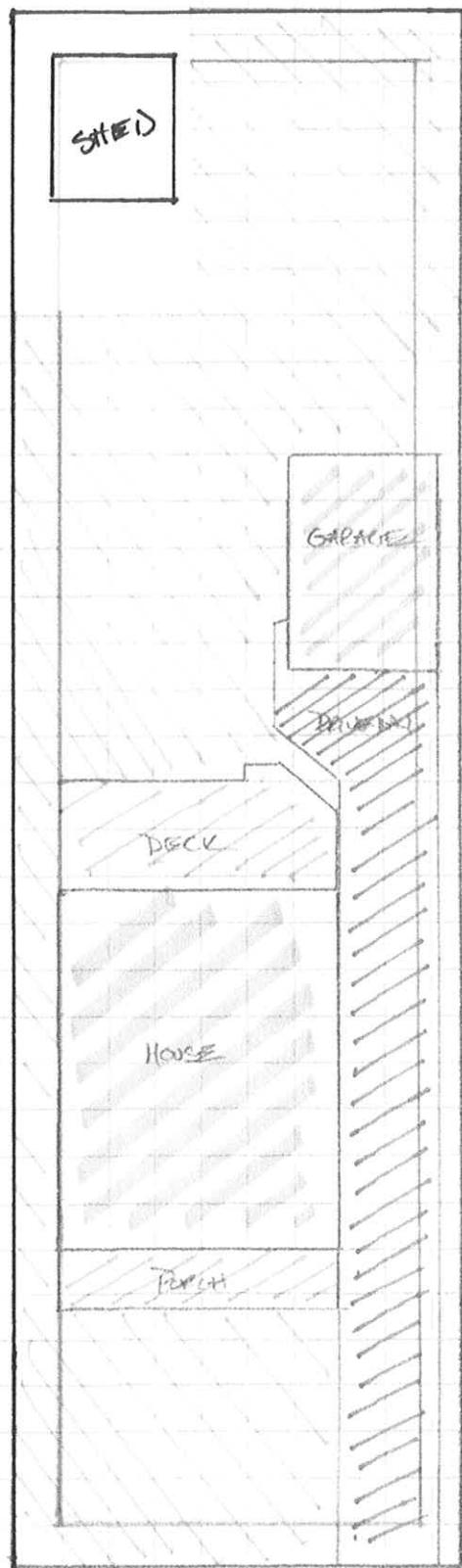
i.) Economically viable use

The property can still be used as a single-family home, but without the variance the homeowner cannot reasonably add even a modest accessory structure for storage/recreation. The variance enables a reasonable, common residential use that many other properties enjoy.

ii.) Hardship not self-created

The need for relief is not solely a result of the owner's actions, but from the lot layout and existing improvements, which constrain where accessory structures may be placed. The location chosen was intended to minimize impact on the yard and neighborhood, not to avoid code requirements.

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Neighbor Support Statement – Variance Request

Applicant Property:
19118 Mitchell Avenue, Rocky River, OH 44116

Neighbor Information (to be completed by signer):

- Name(s): CHRIS S BROCCO
- Address: 19118 MITCHELL AVENUE
- Phone Number: 419-337-6148

I am a neighbor of Chris Sbrocco at 19118 Mitchell Avenue. I am aware of his request for a variance to allow an accessory structure in his backyard. The building is planned at approximately 14 by 18 feet (≈ 252 sq ft) and is positioned closer to the property lines than the zoning code normally requires.

While I understand the zoning code (Sections 1153.151 and 1153.15C) sets limits on size and setback, I want to make clear that I have no objection to this project. The shed will not block my view, interfere with my use of my home, or affect the enjoyment of my property.

Chris has made many improvements to his property since purchasing it, and I believe this structure is in line with that same positive effort. His work has been a benefit to the street and the overall neighborhood.

For these reasons, I support granting this variance.

Signature: MARTIN PAFFET

Printed Name: MARTIN PAFFET

Date: AUGUST 29, 2025

CHRIS S BROCCO

216 50A 0133

19118 MITCHELL AVE

Letter of Support – Variance Request

Applicant Property:
19118 Mitchell Avenue, Rocky River, OH 44116

Neighbor Name & Address:
Dan and Rose Lempke
19036 Mitchell Avenue
Rocky River, OH 44116

To the Rocky River Board of Zoning and Building Appeals,

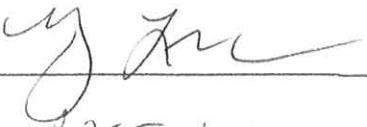
We are writing as neighbors of Chris Sbrocco at 19118 Mitchell Avenue. We have been made aware of his request for a variance so that he can finish the small structure in his backyard.

We know the shed is a little larger than what the zoning code usually allows (about 14 by 18 feet) and is closer to the rear and side property lines than the 5-foot setback requirement. Even so, we want it on record that we do not see this as a problem. From our home at 19036 Mitchell, the building does not block our view, interfere with our use of our property, or affect our daily lives in any way.

In fact, we think Chris has done a tremendous job since moving in. The improvements to his house and yard have been very noticeable, and in our opinion, they have been good for the neighborhood overall. Allowing him to complete this shed seems fair and reasonable.

We have no objection to the variance and believe it should be approved.

Sincerely,

Signature(s): 

Printed Name(s): ROSE LEMPKE

Date: 8/19/25


DANIEL LEMPKE
8/19/25

Neighbor Support Statement – Variance Request

Applicant Property:
19118 Mitchell Avenue, Rocky River, OH 44116

Neighbor Information (to be completed by signer):

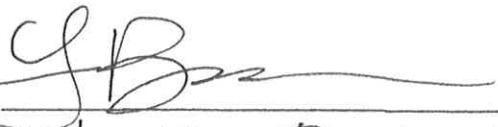
- Name(s): Lauren + Lyall Barbour
- Address: 19113 Colahan DR
- Phone Number: 440 476 3515

I am a neighbor of Chris Sbrocco at 19118 Mitchell Avenue. I am aware of his request for a variance to allow an accessory structure in his backyard. The building is planned at approximately 14 by 18 feet (≈ 252 sq ft) and is positioned closer to the property lines than the zoning code normally requires.

While I understand the zoning code (Sections 1153.151 and 1153.15C) sets limits on size and setback, I want to make clear that I have no objection to this project. The shed will not block my view, interfere with my use of my home, or affect the enjoyment of my property.

Chris has made many improvements to his property since purchasing it, and I believe this structure is in line with that same positive effort. His work has been a benefit to the street and the overall neighborhood.

For these reasons, I support granting this variance.

Signature: 

Printed Name: Lauren Barbour

Date: 8/19/25

Neighbor Support Statement – Variance Request

Applicant Property Address:
19118 Mitchell Avenue, Rocky River, OH 44116

Neighbor Name & Address:
Mary Lynn and Buzz O'Connor
19129 Colahan Drive
Rocky River, OH 44116

Buzz O'Connor
Mary Lynn O'Connor

To the Members of the Rocky River Board of Zoning and Building Appeals:

We are the property owners directly behind 19118 Mitchell Avenue, where Chris Sbrocco is requesting a variance for the construction of an accessory structure in his rear yard. The proposed shed measures approximately 14 feet by 18 feet (≈ 252 sq ft) and is located about 1 foot from the west property line and approximately 3 feet from the rear property line, closest to our lot.

We understand this location does not fully comply with Rocky River Zoning Code Section 1153.151 (Schedule of Regulations for Accessory Uses), which requires a 5-foot setback, and Section 1153.15C, which restricts accessory storage buildings to 120 sq ft.

Our Position as Adjoining Rear Neighbors

- We have reviewed the placement of the posts and the location of the proposed structure on the property.
- The shed's height, width, and placement do not obstruct our sightlines, views, or enjoyment of our property.
- We do not feel the structure will create any negative impact to our home, yard, or property value.

Support for the Variance

- We believe the shed is reasonable in size and height for a property of this lot's dimensions.
- Chris has made substantial improvements to his home since purchasing it, and his work has significantly elevated the condition and appeal of the property, which has had a positive impact on the overall neighborhood.
- We fully support his variance request, as we see no detriment to our property or to the character of the area.

Statement of Support

By signing below, we confirm our strong support for this variance request. We have no objection to the size, height, or location of the shed, even though it is close to our property line. We believe this improvement is consistent with good neighborhood standards and should be permitted to move forward.

Signature(s): Buzz O'Connor Mary Lynn O'Connor

Printed Name(s): Buzz O'Connor Mary Lynn O'Connor

Date: 8/19/2025

Neighbor Support Statement – Variance Request

Applicant Property:
19118 Mitchell Avenue, Rocky River, OH 44116

Neighbor Information (to be completed by signer):

- Name(s): Brian Farrel
- Address: 19145 Colahan Dr.
- Phone Number: 216-313-8677

I am a neighbor of Chris Sbrocco at 19118 Mitchell Avenue. I am aware of his request for a variance to allow an accessory structure in his backyard. The building is planned at approximately 14 by 18 feet (≈ 252 sq ft) and is positioned closer to the property lines than the zoning code normally requires.

While I understand the zoning code (Sections 1153.151 and 1153.15C) sets limits on size and setback, I want to make clear that I have no objection to this project. The shed will not block my view, interfere with my use of my home, or affect the enjoyment of my property.

Chris has made many improvements to his property since purchasing it, and I believe this structure is in line with that same positive effort. His work has been a benefit to the street and the overall neighborhood.

For these reasons, I support granting this variance.

Signature: 

Printed Name: Brian Farrel

Date: 8/19/25

Statement of Support for Variance Request

Applicant Property:
19118 Mitchell Avenue, Rocky River, OH 44116

Supporting Neighbor:
Kyle Christiansen
19128 Mitchell Avenue
Rocky River, OH 44116
Phone: 814-823-1236

Background

I am the immediate western neighbor of 19118 Mitchell Avenue. The accessory structure proposed by the applicant, Chris Sbrocco, will be located approximately 14 feet by 18 feet in size (≈ 252 sq ft) and positioned about 1 foot from my property line and 3 feet from the rear property line.

This location does not fully comply with Rocky River Zoning Code Section 1153.151 (Schedule of Regulations for Accessory Uses), which requires a 5-foot setback, or Section 1153.15C, which restricts accessory storage buildings to 120 sq ft.

Position as Adjoining Neighbor

- I am fully aware that this structure is closer to my property line than the code requires.
- I have reviewed the plans, considered the proximity, and I want to be clear that I have no objection whatsoever to this variance.
- I believe this structure will have no negative impact on my property, my family's use of it, or the neighborhood in general.

Support for the Variance

- In fact, I support the variance strongly. I would be disappointed if the City of Rocky River were to deny it.
- Chris has invested significant time and resources into improving 19118 Mitchell Avenue since his purchase, and I believe his work has been a positive force for our street and neighborhood values.
- Allowing this variance is, in my view, a reasonable and fair decision that will enhance—not detract from—the character of the community.

Confirmation

By signing below, I confirm my support for this variance request. I understand the exact placement of the proposed structure and affirm that I have no objection to its proximity to my property line.

Signature: 

Printed Name: Kyle CHRISTIANSEN
Date: 08/19/25

Neighbor Support Statement

Applicant Property:

19118 Mitchell Avenue, Rocky River, OH 44116

Neighbor Name & Address:

Katherine (Kay) Lapinski
19042 Mitchell Avenue
Rocky River, OH 44116

To Whom It May Concern,

I live at 19042 Mitchell Avenue and am a nearby neighbor of Chris Sbrocco at 19118 Mitchell Avenue. I am aware that Chris is requesting a variance for the small accessory structure he is building in his back yard.

Although the shed is larger than what the code normally allows and sits closer to the property line than required, I have no objection to it. The structure does not negatively affect me or my property in any way. In fact, I believe the improvements Chris has made to his home and yard have been very positive for our neighborhood and have raised the overall standard of the street.

I fully support his request for a variance and have no concerns with the size or location of the structure.

Respectfully,

Signature: Katherine Lapinski 
Printed Name: _____
Date: 8-19-25

Neighbor Support Statement – Variance Request

Applicant Property:
19118 Mitchell Avenue, Rocky River, OH 44116

Neighbor Name & Address:
Nancy McCahan
19028 Mitchell Avenue
Rocky River, OH 44116

To the Rocky River Board of Zoning and Building Appeals,

I am a neighbor of Chris Sbrocco at 19118 Mitchell Avenue. I am aware of his request for a variance to allow an accessory structure in his backyard. The building is planned at approximately 14 by 18 feet (≈ 252 sq ft) and is positioned closer to the property lines than the code normally requires.

While I understand the zoning code (Sections 1153.151 and 1153.15C) sets limits on size and setback, I want to make clear that I have no objection to this project. The shed will not block my view, interfere with my use of my home, or affect the enjoyment of my property.

Chris has made many visible improvements to his property since purchasing it, and I believe this structure is in line with that same positive effort. His work has been a benefit to our block and to the overall look and feel of our neighborhood.

For these reasons, I fully support granting this variance.

Sincerely,

Signature: Nancy McCahan

Printed Name: Nancy McCahan

Date: 8/19/2025
