



**Marilyn Jordan Taylor**  
*Dean and Paley Professor*

August 15, 2012

Re: NCI Fund - Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern:

In 35 years as an architect specializing in urban development projects around the world, I have seen many communities -- especially mid-size and smaller communities – propose great plans only to see them flounder in a sea of endless RFPs and proposals. Unable to access the needed capital or assemble the right experts and advisers, they fail to make their dreams a reality.

Often what is missing is the confirmation that elected and civic leaders need to believe that what they are doing is realistic in the marketplace. Or they may need strategic design advice – not down to the color of the shutters, but about how their project fits in the larger urban landscape. Most importantly they may need a team that can make a project “developer ready” and find the resources that move an idea toward implementation. This is where the Neighborhood Capital Institute (NCI) and the NCI Fund come in.

NCI founder and President Ruth Wuorenma has a unique ability to put her finger on the critical factors that make or break a project. From design through development through financing, she can bring the right experts together. I have admired Ruth’s leadership over many years and enjoyed our experience together on the Urban Land Institute’s Public-Private Partnership Council. From that perspective I can clearly see how effective NCI is in helping elected officials and community groups overcome an absence of resources by assembling experts in different fields, from the public and private sectors, to achieve inspiring and public-serving large-scale developments.

NCI is now taking an exciting new step that will extend its impact: the NCI Fund. The “first money in” for a project – often the funding for planning and predevelopment activities - is typically the most elusive money, the most difficult money to procure. Accordingly, there is much need for an approach that would make this front-end money available to the public sector, not as a gift or grant but as a solid investment in a community that has untapped potential, potential to offer more to both its stakeholders and to those seeking to invest in opportunities that can achieve well-articulated public goals as well as success in the marketplace.

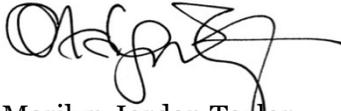
102 Meyerson Hall 210 South 34th Street Philadelphia, PA 19104-6311  
215.898.3425 [mjtaylor@design.upenn.edu](mailto:mjtaylor@design.upenn.edu)  
[www.design.upenn.edu](http://www.design.upenn.edu)

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NCI's role is particularly important because it is not a developer with its own interests carrying out the project primarily for financial gain. Instead, Ruth has positioned NCI as an honest broker linking public and private resources and connecting public and private expertise.

In summary, for public officials and leaders seeking to catalyze change, NCI and the NCI Fund bring three crucial elements to the table: commitment to a transformative idea, the expertise to supplement a community or city's existing talent and assets, and access to the money to make it happen. I offer my whole-hearted support for NCI's work and the NCI Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marilyn Jordan Taylor', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marilyn Jordan Taylor



## **Marilyn Taylor**

**Dean of the University of Pennsylvania  
School of Design**

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Marilyn became Dean of The School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania in 2008 after spending more than thirty years as partner, architect and urban designer at Skidmore Owings & Merrill, where she led the firm's practices in airports, transportation, and urban design and served as its first woman Chairman. She is internationally known for her distinguished and passionate involvement in the design of large-scale urban projects and civic initiatives. Taylor is distinguished as well for her civic and professional leadership, having served as a member and Rockefeller Fellow of The Partnership for New York City, President of the American Institute of Architects (NYC Chapter), visiting professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Chairman of the New York Building Congress, founding (2001) member of the New York New Visions, and as Chairman of ULI Worldwide (2005-2007). Taylor attended Harvard University, The MIT Graduate School of Architecture and the University of California, Berkeley where she received her Masters of Architecture. PennDesign provides masters and PHD degrees to outstanding students in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, city and regional planning, historic preservation, and the fine arts.