



President Lincoln at Fort Stevens, 1864

ALLIANCE TO PRESERVE THE CIVIL WAR DEFENSES OF WASHINGTON

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Mr. Marc B. Loud, Chairman
D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th St. N.W. Suite 200 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Emory United Methodist Beacon of Light Church, BZA # 17964
6100-20 Georgia Ave. N.W.

Dear Chairman Loud and Honorable Board Members,

My name is Tersh Boasberg. I am a resident of the District of Columbia (DC). I write in my capacity as the President of a relatively new non-profit organization, the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington (Alliance). As you can see from our stationery, we bring together noted Civil War authors, a former Director of the DC Office of Planning, a former Chairman of the DC Zoning Commission, a former Regional Associate Director of the National Park Service (NPS), the Chair of a Ward 4 ANC, and many other local and national experts.

In a nutshell, we are all worried that the Church's proposed massive 5 story new housing and office "wall", especially along its western property line, will greatly and adversely impact the visitor experience at adjoining Ft. Stevens' Park.

The Alliance has been working closely with the National Park Service, the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT), and others to develop a hiker/biker trail and greenway connecting all 17 DC Civil War Forts and Battleground Cemetery located just north of the Church on Georgia Avenue. This new trail and greenway has been recognized as a signature project of the Capital-Space Initiative (www.capitalspace.gov), a joint effort of the NPS, National Capital Planning Commission (NCPD) and DC's Office of Planning (OP). Indeed, only last year the Alliance won recognition from the Washington Smart Growth Alliance (www.SGAlliance.org) for its efforts in connecting the forts.

The historical centerpiece of the DC Civil War Forts system is Ft. Stevens, built in 1861, actually on the very ground where the Church

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now stands, but expanded in 1863 to include the grounds and reconstructed parapets (1938) now seen by visitors adjoining the Church's property immediately to the west. Here, on July 11 and 12, 1864, Union defenders defeated a veteran Confederate Army under Jubal Early to save the Nation's Capital. Famously, President Lincoln came to Ft. Stevens to witness the Battle, thus becoming the only sitting US president to come under enemy fire in time of war. We honor that event in our stationery logo.

Ft. Stevens is a DC Landmark as well as one listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the subject of increasing interest as a tourist destination, especially as we approach the 150th anniversary of the Civil War and the Battle. It has been featured on TV programs, in two NPS brochures ("Civil War Defenses of Washington" and the recently issued "The Battle of Fort Stevens"), in tours led by the Washington Area Bicycle Assoc. and by Cultural Tourism, DC, among many others. Moreover, it is well known that our current Brightwood neighborhood grew out of the African-American community which lived and worked around Ft. Stevens.

According to the DC Office of Planning's Sept. 15, 2009 Staff Report, on file, the massive development proposed by the Church will necessitate a 25% increase in the allowable height limit, up to 63 ft.; a 20% increase in allowable FAR; an increase of over 10% in allowable lot occupancy; and the Church has proposed other variances as well.

We believe that instead of allowing *increased* height and density, the BZA should shape this development to better protect the local and national treasure of Ft. Stevens next door. Indeed, we feel that the DC Comprehensive Plan asks no less; and specifically mentions the Civil War Forts. See, **Policy Pros-3.1.5: Fort Circle Parks**, which admonishes:

Protect and enhance the Fort Circle Parks as an integrated network of permanent open spaces that connect neighborhoods, provide scenic beauty and historic interest, and offer a variety of recreational activities. Recognize these parks as an important city and national resource. Prevent District and federal actions that would harm historic and ecological resources in the Fort Circle Parks, and strongly support actions that would improve their maintenance, connectivity, visibility, accessibility and safety. (Emphasis provided)

Further, the Historic Preservation Element of the DC Comprehensive Plan urges us to protect historic landscapes and open space: "such settings should be protected and maintained" (HP-2.5); "retain landscaped yards, gardens, estate grounds and other significant areas of green space associated with historic landmarks whenever possible." (HP-2.5.6); "take special care at historic landmarks and in historic districts to

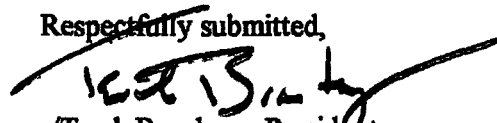
protect this public environment from intrusions, whether from excess paving, vehicular access and parking, *high walls ...*" (HP-2.5.4).

As presently proposed, the Church plans to construct a "wall" consisting of 5 stories (63 ft.) of housing and offices surrounding its north, west, south, and, partially, its east side, as well. Of particular concern to us, the western portion of this massive and unbroken wall (together with 2-thirty foot loading docks, trash dumpsters, etc.) will come right out to the adjoining property line with Ft. Stevens.

The proposed development, with no screening whatsoever, turns its back on the thousands of visitors to Ft. Stevens. It will substantially detract from the solemn experience of witnessing a historic 19th Century battlefield where hundreds died to protect our city and nation. As the visitor looks northwards over the emplaced cannon and to the east to see the route of the 7th Street turnpike (now Georgia Avenue) used by Jubal Early, all that will be seen will be a high, heavy, solid wall of modern construction and trucking docks..

With the utmost respect to the Church and its rights to develop its property, we respectfully ask the BZA to consider that this "wall" be substantially reduced in height, set back and screened from Ft. Stevens, especially on the western portion of the Church's property. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,



s/Tersh Boasberg, President