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2009 DEC 14 PM 4:39

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December 14, 2009

Adrienne A Coleman
Superintendent, Rock Creek Park
3545 Williamsburg Lane, NW
Washington, DC 20008-1207

Dear Adrienne Coleman

In reference to the National Park Service letter to Emory United Methodist Church, dated September 3, 2009, several concerns were raised with regard to the perceived impact of the proposed development to the property. The property is currently zoned C-2-A which is supported by the comprehensive plan that calls for mix-use moderate density residential and commercial.

The Beacon Center project will be a benefit to the Brightwood community at large evidenced by the overwhelming community support. The center will provide space for much needed resources and programs to the community. Housing for various target groups including permanent supportive, transitional, affordable and senior housing, recreation space, classrooms, retail space, and community services space are among the many benefits the Beacon Center will offer. This project is a critical part of the revitalization that needs to take place along Georgia Ave. It was critical that we respond to the issues raised in your letter (highlighted in italics).

The massing is out of scale relative to Fort Stevens. Five story wall with no true visual break. It is our belief that the massing responds appropriately to the program needs and the uniqueness of the site. The project team has worked closely with the Historic Preservation Office to develop massing that responds to the many attributes of the site and surrounding context. Some of the most prominent aspects are the preservation of the existing church, the 13 foot hillside and a building with three major facades. The proposed massing strikes a balance among the various influences. The preservation of the church and 13 foot hillside set the floor levels and extended the massing to the edges of the site. While the massing along Georgia Ave was given prominence in response to it being a major corridor, the articulation along Quackenbos and Old Piney Branch Road received equal detail of materials due to its context. The use of multiple materials in conjunction with the varied depth of planes and strong horizontal bands provide visual breaks in the façade to reduce the overall massing.

The building will cause severe visual impact on the landscape. The current landscape provides a buffer zone and relatively open landscape around the fort.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 17964

EXHIBIT NO. 43

Board of Zoning Adjustment
A United Methodist Congregation
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17964
EXHIBIT NO. 43

The property provides a visual break between the activities along Georgia Avenue and the fort. The Fort, per the comprehensive plan, has planned buffers of relatively open landscape around with 13th Street (a large right of way), Rittenhouse (low density residential) and Quackenbos (adjacent NPS land) However, Old Piney Branch Road, per the comprehensive plan, have no planned buffer to the Fort and is zoned C-2-A which plans for the continuation of the activity along Georgia Avenue establishing the avenue as a Great Street Per our plan, the massing responds to Georgia Avenue as a Great Street and also exceeds the required rear yard setback along Old Piney Branch Road providing additional space for separation

The vehicular traffic for the access road will negatively impact the site, not to mention the substantial increase in vehicular traffic for the development as a whole Old Piney Branch Road, which is currently not improved to DDOT standards and used primarily as access to the church parking lot, is seen as an opportunity to improve pedestrian and vehicular access to the property through the addition of paved walkways and street trees with planting strip. A portion of the church's property will be used to create the enhanced street edge. The street improvements along with the dedicated NPS gift shop will add value to Fort Stevens visitors. The current use of Old Piney Branch Road as the vehicular and service entrance to the site will be maintained (required by DDOT) The service areas for the complex will be enclosed and housed completely within the structure providing an enhancement to the current condition Also, per the traffic study conducted, it was determined that the increase of traffic generated from this development will not necessitate any upgrades to the traffic controls surrounding the site. Furthermore, per our plan, a half of the parking spaces provided will be accessed directly off Quackenbos reducing the overall impact along Old Piney Branch Road

The lost of visual connection to the church is detrimental to the interpretative relationship between our two properties. After meeting with you on December 4, 2009, we understand the interpretative relationship as explained in your tours to be with the visual connection to Georgia Avenue Also, with your acknowledgement, any additional structure on the church's property will interrupt the relationship While we are sensitive to the relationship, the church is within its rights to build on its property However, through collaboration with the Historic Preservation Office and the in depth knowledge of the Church, the historic relationship between the church and the Fort has been an integral part of the plan The Church recognizes the connection shared with the Fort and thus opted to include the Fort Gift shop in the new development to maintain that connection In addition, the project team has had preliminary investigated archeological work completed which will be fully integrated into the construction process moving forward

In response to your concerns, we believe the project has provided massing that balances the uniqueness of the site and provided additional setback above that required per zoning at Old Piney Branch Road along with enhancements to the street edge at the pedestrian level and articulation of the massing to reduce the scale. Lastly, our team is committed to preserving the connection to Fort Stevens and will preserve artifacts discovered during construction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph W. Daniels, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev Dr. Joseph W Daniels, Jr

Senior Pastor

Copy to
Gina Merritt (NUREV)
Hazel Broadnax (EBOL)
Sean Pichon (PGN)
Jeff Goins (PGN)
George Keys (J&K)