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**NATIONAL
TRUST
FOR
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION**

**Southern
FIELD OFFICE**

January 6, 2010

Marc D. Loud, Chairman
D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Beacon Center, BZA Application #17964

Dear Chairman Loud:

I am writing on behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to express our serious concerns regarding the preservation and protection of historic Fort Stevens, which is a designated District of Columbia Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation shares the views which have been expressed to the Board of Zoning Adjustment by the National Park Service, Civil War Preservation Trust, and the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington regarding the adverse impacts of the planned five-story, mixed-use structure proposed for construction adjacent to historic Fort Stevens. Fort Stevens is an irreplaceable part of United States history which merits careful preservation for the benefit of the citizens of the District of Columbia and the nation. We respectfully urge the Board of Zoning Adjustment to deny the Emory United Methodist Church's request for variance relief.

Chartered by Congress in 1949, the National Trust for Historic Preservation is a private, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to protecting irreplaceable historic places. Recipient of the National Humanities Medal, the National Trust provides leadership, education, and advocacy to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize communities. Its Washington DC headquarters, eight regional and field offices, and twenty-nine historic sites work with the National Trust's 270,000 members and thousands of local community groups in all fifty states.

Historic Fort Stevens and the other surviving portions of the 37-mile circle of fortifications that constituted the Civil War Defenses of Washington are highly significant in our nation's history. Their value to an understanding of American military history is unparalleled. However, many today are not aware that Fort Stevens and the Civil War Defenses of Washington also merit careful stewardship for their close historic connections to the many thousands of African Americans who freed themselves from slavery and sought protection behind Union lines. For these courageous people and their descendants, Fort Stevens and the Civil War Defenses of Washington were an abiding symbol of freedom.

**BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia**

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17964
EXHIBIT NO. 54

The District of Columbia is a uniquely beautiful place with unforgettable historic places -- fragile community assets which deserve our best efforts at stewardship. Fortunately, the District of Columbia also is an acknowledged leader in the nation's historic preservation movement and cultural heritage tourism industry. To its credit, the District of Columbia has earned a reputation as an excellent steward of its historic properties and heritage tourism assets and, as local residents know well, a well-managed historic preservation and cultural heritage tourism program can provide many benefits to local communities. Cultural heritage tourism and historic preservation create jobs and businesses, increase tax revenue, diversify the local economy, preserve important local traditions, and build community pride. Civic leaders in the District of Columbia should be certain that historic resources in the city, including Fort Stevens, are adequately protected for future generations to enjoy.

To its credit, the D.C. Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the need to preserve and protect the Fort Circle Parks and Fort Stevens:

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. [DC Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 8, 3.1.5.]

Unfortunately, across the nation historic sites like Fort Stevens are disappearing faster than we can learn about and help protect them. Too often, these irreplaceable historic places are encroached upon, neglected, and lost unnecessarily. If these vulnerable assets are lost -- or so severely altered as to be rendered unrecognizable -- we can never get them back.

Therefore, in light of the historic, scenic, and educational value of historic Fort Stevens, the National Trust for Historic Preservation respectfully requests that the Board of Zoning Adjustment should deny the applicant's requests for variance relief. We respectfully urge the Emory United Methodist Church's and the Board of Zoning Adjustment's support for significant changes to the applicant's proposal which would substantially reduce the height of the proposed new structure, set back the new building to reduce the mass facing the historic fort, and require screening to mitigate visual impacts to Fort Stevens.

Thank you in advance for considering the views of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert Nieweg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Robert Nieweg
Director, Southern Field Office
National Trust for Historic Preservation