



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

National Capital Region

1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY REFER TO:

FEB 22 2010

D20 (NCR-LRP)

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

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2010 FEB 22 PM 12:48

RE: Beacon Center
BZA Application #17964

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The National Park Service hereby renews its objection to the variance relief sought by Emory United Methodist Church (Applicant) for the proposed Beacon Center. As we described in our letter of December 9, 2009, we feel strongly that the additional floor and increased density sought through relief of the existing height, Floor Area Ratio, and lot occupancy requirements will irrevocably harm Ft. Stevens, the adjacent historic resource, and therefore be detrimental to the public good.

Although the proposed project is laudable for its goals, to grant the requested variances would be in direct conflict with the DC Comprehensive Plan, which specifically calls for the protection of the Fort Circle Parks and therefore Ft. 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, and Safety. [Chapter 8, 3.1.5]

There has been much discussion about whether or not Georgia Avenue is currently visible from the fort, but that is not the point. Development of such a scale and so close to this National Register listed property destroys the its "setting," "feeling," and "association" with the surrounding landscape, three of the criteria used to evaluate properties for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. As designed, the distance between the fort and the 5 story wall of the Beacon Center is so small that it will not even allow enough space to plant a screen of trees to try and preserve the "setting" and "feeling" of the fort. In addition, it will block views over the surrounding neighborhood, so that visitors will no longer understand the fort's geographical advantage and strategic importance during the Civil War, thereby diminishing its historical "association." The proposed Beacon Center will clearly have a significant impact on the fort (See attachment D) and could potentially threaten Ft. Steven's National Register and DC Historic Landmark status.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 17964

EXHIBIT NO. 64

Board of Zoning Adjustment
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EXHIBIT NO. 64

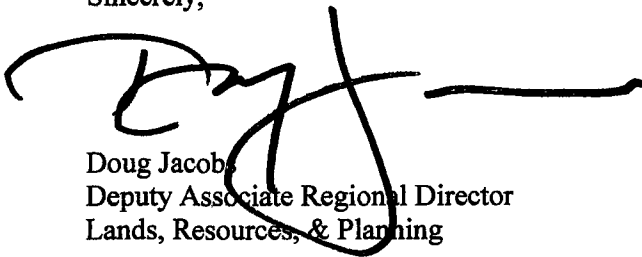
We are discouraged that the Applicant has refused to pursue what we feel is a very reasonable compromise which was developed in collaboration with them on January 16, 2010. The compromise sought to set back only the northwest corner, the portion of the project directly adjacent to the fort battlements, in order to provide enough room for a row of trees to fully mature and screen the development from the church. It also sought to step back a small portion of the 5th storey in this same corner to further preserve the setting of the fort. The NPS suggested that any lost square footage could be made up for with an additional story on either the north or south wings of the building, which flank the church, further away from both the fort and the historic church and more appropriately located towards Georgia Avenue. Unfortunately, the Applicant has apparently decided not to pursue this since it would be possibly push the project into the realm of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) which many including the NPS feel is more appropriate process for reviewing a project of this scale and impact.

Additionally, the NPS would like to make two points of clarification regarding issues which were raised during the previous hearing on December 10, 2009. First, the actual visitorship of Ft. Stevens is dramatically higher than portrayed by the applicant. Please see the attached visitor counts (Attachment A) which were not available during the previous hearing. Second, the absence of a specific mention of the fort in the Office of Planning's submitted report cannot be construed as "approval" or "concurrence" from the Office of Historic Preservation that the proposed project will not have an impact on this vital historic resource. In an article in the February 10th issue of the Northwest Current, Steve Callcott of the DC Office of Historic Preservation is quoted as saying that his office did not review the project from the context of the adjacent fort property (Attachment B). Additionally, the NPS's position relative to the great significance of the Ft. Stevens property is further supported by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Attachment C).

Further, the NPS has communicated to the Applicant that should Federal monies be used to build this project, be it in the form of grants from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development or other similar funding, the project could be considered a Federal "undertaking" for the purposes of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. In that circumstance, a public comment process would be required through the Section 106 and Environmental Assessment processes, and the Applicant would be compelled to take the impacts of their project on adjacent historic properties into full account.

Thank you for your careful consideration in this most important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Jacob', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Doug Jacob
Deputy Associate Regional Director
Lands, Resources, & Planning

Enclosures

CC: George Keys, Jordan & Keys, PLLC
Robert Nieweg, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Tersh Boasberg, Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington
John Parsons, Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington
Susan Claffey, Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia
Frank Cooling

Fort Stevens Visitation 2009-2010

2009

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
1954	1945	2012	2856	3243	4812	4689	4809	2721	2780	1901	1120	34842

2010

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
1911												1911

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

DUCK!



Bill Petros/The Current

Snowballs were flying in every direction Saturday afternoon at Dupont Circle as thousands took part in a friendly snowball fight organized via Facebook.

Hardy students rally for principal

■ **Schools:** Council members meet with young D.C. activists

By JESSICA GOULD
Current Staff Writer

Wielding signs and wearing stickers with the words "Hope for Pope" emblazoned on them, more than 100 Hardy Middle School students descended on the Wilson Building last week to express sup-

port for their principal.

In a December meeting, Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee announced that Hardy principal Patrick Pope would be leaving his post at the end of the academic year to help design, plan and lead a new arts magnet for middle-schoolers.

She said Hyde-Addison Elementary principal Dana Nerenberg would extend her leadership to the nearby Georgetown school. Hardy is located at 1819

35th St., and Hyde-Addison is located about a dozen blocks away, at 3219 O St.

In her announcement to the school community, Rhee said she selected Pope for the new magnet because he "has done a wonderful job of building the program" at Hardy.

But the news immediately sent shockwaves through the Hardy community, and angry students and See **Hardy**/Page 8

Mount Vernon plan density irks ANC

By IAN THOMS
Current Staff Writer

Unless George Washington University reduces the height and size of some buildings proposed for its Mount Vernon campus, the Palisades-Foxhall advisory neighborhood commission plans to fight the school's plans.

"I don't vote against anything, and I'm inclined right now to vote against it," said commissioner Tom Ditonto. "... And if I'm opposed to it, that's bad news."

The commission's posture — reflected in comments made at last week's monthly meeting — was somewhat surprising because neighbors of the university and school officials had already resolved several points of contention.

After months of discussion, the university had agreed to reduce the size of a few proposed buildings and drop plans to light its athletic field. The school also See **Campus**/Page 10



Matt Petros/The Current

University officials eased neighbors' worries by agreeing to conditions such as not installing lights on the Mount Vernon athletic field.

Fort Stevens buffs fight church's plan

By ELIZABETH WIENER
Current Staff Writer

Fort Stevens and Emory United Methodist Church have shared a block in Brightwood, as well as a significant bit of history, since the Civil War. Now the church's plan to develop its grounds is drawing opposition from Civil War buffs and National Park Service officials, who fear a new building could block views from the ramparts where President Lincoln dodged Confederate fire.

The church, at 6100 Georgia Ave., wants to build affordable housing for seniors, veterans, families and the formerly homeless on land surrounding its 1922 sanctuary. The new U-shaped building would also house a gym, church offices and classrooms, stores and space for a gift shop or interpretive center for the adja-



Bill Petros/The Current

The most famous moment at Fort Stevens occurred during the Civil War, when President Abraham Lincoln came under Confederate fire.

cent fort.

But the proposed 180,000-square-foot structure, as currently planned, would back up to the eastern edge of the fort, which is perhaps the most significant remnant

See **Emory**/Page 7

Cheh eyes parking garage for Cleveland Park shops

■ **Transportation:** DDOT seen as likely to resist idea

By IAN THOMS
Current Staff Writer

Ward 3 D.C. Council member Mary Cheh has floated an ambitious idea for adding parking spaces to Cleveland Park and helping local merchants eager for more patrons: build a municipal garage somewhere in the neighborhood.

In an interview Monday, Cheh said she has begun to talk to residents and business owners about the

prospect, and though some have doubts about its feasibility, most agree the neighborhood could use the parking.

"I think it would be the most spectacular idea ever," said Susan Lihn, owner of Wake Up Little Susie on Connecticut Avenue.

Lihn and other business owners say that in recent years they've lost many regular patrons to nearby areas with ample parking, such as Columbia Heights, and they think it's time the city helped.

"People who used to come to Cleveland Park on a regular basis See **Parking**/Page 11

NEWS

■ **Council bill would allow nighttime parking near corners.** Page 3
■ **Initial DCPS decision to open draws poor grades.** Page 5.



SPORTS

■ **Signing day yields bounty of Northwest recruits.** Page 15.
■ **Visitation seniors look back at on-field success.** Page 15.



PASSAGES

■ **Visitation sisters celebrate order's 400th anniversary.** Page 17.
■ **New drama on mental illness premieres at GU.** Page 17.



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EMORY

From Page 1

of the Fort Circle system that guarded the nation's capital during the Civil War.

Late in the zoning game, opposition from the National Park Service and some historians and preservationists is threatening to derail the plan, or force what the church calls "drastic changes."

With a Feb. 23 zoning decision looming, both sides seem to be shooting past each other. The Park Service is proposing changes church officials say are not feasible. And the director of Emory Beacon of Light, the church's nonprofit community development arm, says the Park Service's concerns are unfounded.

"Whereas visitors can now look across the open church yard toward the road from which the Confederate forces advanced, they will only see a looming five-story wall of residential development," Adrienne Coleman, then superintendent of Rock Creek Park, wrote to the Board of Zoning Adjustment in December.

"The proposed development would be a travesty to the historical landscape," wrote Benjamin Franklin Cooling, a Civil War historian.

Ayize Nkosi, who heads Emory Beacon of Light, disagrees. "If you're standing on top of the fort, you can't even see Georgia Avenue," he said.

"It's all built up. Their concerns are not really valid, and came very, very late," Nkosi added. "It's not like we're building luxury condos. It's all affordable housing."

The Board of Zoning Adjustment, which is considering Emory Beacon's request for zoning

variances, in late January put off its decision for a month in hopes that the sides could negotiate a truce.

The Park Service, according to Coleman's letter, wants the new building held to existing density

"It's not like we're building luxury condos. It's all affordable housing."

— Ayize Nkosi

and height limits. In meetings and letters, the Park Service and its allies have suggested eliminating the gym, pushing the west wall of the building farther from the fort, and stepping back its upper floor to make it less intrusive.

George Keys, the church's zoning attorney, said it is studying the Park Service proposal "to see if it's financially and architecturally feasible." But he said the proposed changes would mean "a significant loss" of density and the possibility Emory Beacon would need a different zoning variance, possibly starting the process all over again. "What they're proposing will cost a lot of money," he said.

Nkosi, also, is not optimistic. "To be honest, it's not feasible," he said in a telephone interview. "I really don't see a compromise, not considering what they're asking for."

The original Emory chapel preceded Fort Stevens, according to historians, and was commandeered to serve as barracks, hospital and jail for the fort during the war. The 14-foot berm the current church sits on is itself a remnant of the Civil War fortification and, not incidentally, would put the new addition above current height limits.

Fort Stevens (originally called Fort Massachusetts) was built in 1861 to guard the high ground near 7th Street (now Georgia Avenue) and possible routes from the north. The fort was originally on the site now occupied by the church, then expanded to the west along what is now Piney Branch Road.

In July 1864, famously, Fort Stevens came under Confederate attack while President Lincoln was visiting, making him the only sitting U.S. president to come under enemy fire during war. "Lincoln walked the Fort Massachusetts ramparts as well as the ground now further threatened by the church's development proposal," historian Cooling wrote to the zoning board.

"An argument could be made, frankly, that all structures ... (excepting the modern stone church building) ... should be appropriately removed," Cooling wrote. "It

most certainly seems unconscionable to further degrade the historic site of Fort Stevens ... [with] a five story new housing 'wall.'"

But the 1922 church building is also an icon in Brightwood, so cherished that a survey of the neighborhood deemed it "eligible" for the National Register of Historic Places, according to Steve Callcott of the D.C. Historic Preservation Office.

Thus Callcott reviewed the design to make sure it would be compatible with the church's historic character, and suggested pushing new construction toward the fort's property line. "The Historic Preservation Office suggested we push the massing of the building toward the rear," Keys said.

"We did not review the project from the context of the adjacent fort property," Callcott said in an e-mail. "If the church was a landmark, the proposal could only be

evaluated under the preservation law for its compatibility with the landmark, rather than on adjacent properties."

Ward 4 Council member Muriel Bowser said she hopes the church's proposal will be approved. "The National Park Service has an interest in protecting the fort. That's vital," Bowser said. "But the Emory proposal is supported by the community, and will add amenities for the fort. There's room for both sides to win."

The case is already behind schedule. In September, two zoning board members — Peter May, a top planner for the Park Service; and chair Marc Loud, who said he has personal and family connections with the church — recused themselves, delaying an initial hearing. Beacon had originally hoped to break ground by the end of last year.

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ATTACHMENT C

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.

Southern Field Office

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www.PreservationNation.org

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, appearing to read "R. Nieweg", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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





IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

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D20 (NCR-LRP)

Marc D. Loud, Chairman
D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
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Washington, D.C. 20001

RE Beacon Center
BZA Application #17964

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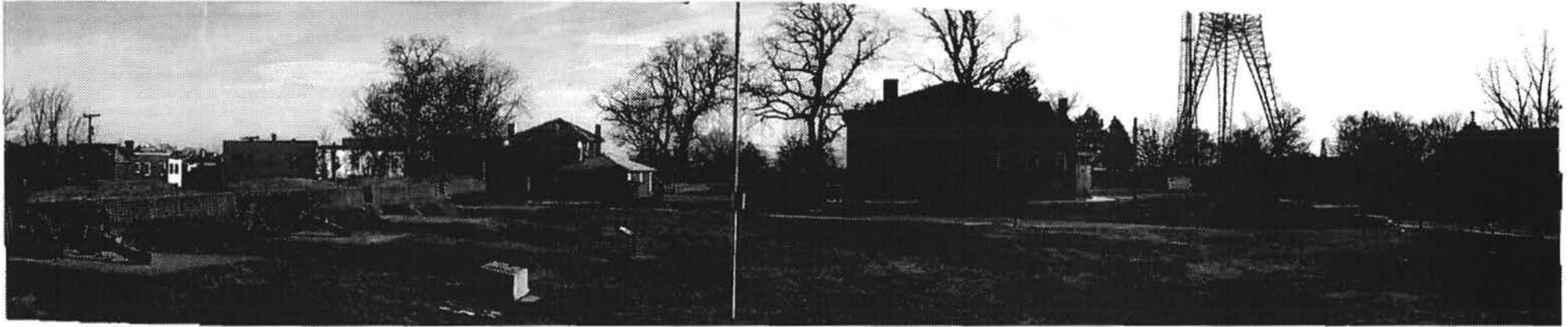
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ATTACHMENT D



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