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Outline of Testimony before the Board of Zoning Adjustment

BZA Application No. 18317
Meridian Hill Baptist Church - 3146 16th Street, N.W.

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I. Site location and description

A. Location

1. West side of 16th Street between Irving and Lamont Streets, N.W.
2. Project site consists of Lot 831 in Square 2595
3. Site located in the Mount Pleasant area in the Mount Pleasant Historic District

B. Size and shape

1. Site area is approximately 14,714 square feet
2. Rectangular in shape
3. Approximately 122.65 feet of frontage on 16th Street

C. Existing site condition:

1. Improved with a 3 story building built in 1916 with a 3 story addition constructed in 1927
2. Building is now vacant
3. Was last used as the Meridian Hill Baptist Church
4. Building was severely damaged by fire in 2008 and has been unoccupied since then

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 18317
EXHIBIT NO. 31

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5. Church has located to new quarters elsewhere and will not be returning to the site

II. Description of surrounding area (see aerial photo, attached)

- A. Mount Pleasant area
- B. Immediate area contains a mix of mid and high-rise apartments, 2 and 3 story rowhouses and neighborhood retail uses
- C. Remainder of Square 2595
 1. To the north:
 - a. Apartment house at 3150 16th Street (6 stories)
 - b. Mount Pleasant Branch Library at 3160 16th Street (3 stories)
 - c. Apartment houses at 3149 and 3151 Mount Pleasant Street (4 stories)
 - d. Mix of 1, 2 and 3 story commercial buildings at 3153-3173 Mount Pleasant Street
 2. To the west:
 - a. Remaining façade of 3145 Mount Pleasant Street (former apartment building destroyed by fire)
 - b. Apartment building at 3127-3131 Mount Pleasant Street (4 stories)
 3. To the south:
 - a. Residential row structures at 3100-3120 16th Street (3 stories)
 - b. Apartment house at 3126 16th Street (4 stories)
 - c. Apartment house at 3132 16th Street (8 stories)
 - d. Mix of 1, 3 and 4 story buildings devoted to retail and residential uses at 3103-3125 Mount Pleasant Street
- D. Other uses within 500 feet:
 1. To the west:
 - a. Mixed residential uses

- b. Commercial uses along the west side of Mount Pleasant Street
- 2. To the east:
 - a. Lincoln Middle School on the east side of 16th Street north of Irving Street
 - b. Offices of the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation
 - c. Playing fields
- 3. Uses to the north:
 - a. Sacred Heart Church at 1516 Park Road
 - b. Apartment house at 3200 16th Street (8 stories)
 - c. Apartment houses at 1627 and 1647 Lamont Street (4 stories)

III. Zoning: R-5-D

- A. Uses (§350.4)
 - 1. Multiple dwellings
 - 2. Hotels existing as of May 16, 1980
 - 3. Institutional uses permitted by lower intensity residential districts
 - 4. Colleges or universities permitted by special exception
- B. Maximum height: 90 feet (§400)
- C. Maximum FAR: 3.5 (§402)
- D. Maximum FAR using inclusionary zoning: 4.2 (§2604.1)
- E. Maximum percentage of lot occupancy: 75% (§403)
- F. Minimum required rear yard – 4 inches per foot of height at the rear, minimum 15 feet (§404)
- G. Side yard – not required except for detached single-family residences (§405)
- H. Minimum required off-street parking (§2101.1): 1 space for each 3 dwelling units

IV. Proposed development

- A. Demolish rear wing constructed in 1926 and replace with new additions at the west and south sides of the older church building
- B. Use: apartment house
- C. Gross floor area of approximately 61,800 square feet (4.20 FAR) and 57 dwelling units
- D. Height: 76.4 feet
- E. Parking: 32 spaces

V. Relief required

- A. Variance from the rear yard requirements (§404)
 - 1. Minimum required: 4" per foot of vertical distance from the mean finished grade at the middle of the rear to the highest point of the roof or parapet; at proposed height, minimum of 26.3 feet is required
 - 2. Proposed: 6 feet at the southern end of the rear yard and 15 feet for most of the rear yard
 - 3. Variance: 20.3 feet to 11.3 feet
- B. Variance from the court requirements (§406)
 - 1. North court
 - a. Minimum required: 3 inches per foot of height of court; based on the height of this court, 10.7 feet is required
 - b. Proposed: 4.5 feet
 - c. Variance: 6.2 feet
 - 2. South court
 - a. Minimum required: 3 inches per foot of height of court; based on the height of this court, 10.7 feet is required
 - b. Proposed: 6 feet
 - c. Variance: 4.7 feet

VI. Standards for a variance (§3103.2)

- A. Where, by reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific piece of property at the time of the original adoption of the regulations, or by reason of exceptional topographical conditions or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition of a specific piece of property,
- B. the strict application of any regulation adopted under D.C. Code §§5-413 to 4-432 (1981) would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to or exceptional and undue hardship upon the owner of the property, to authorize, upon an appeal relating to the property, a variance from the strict application so as to relieve the difficulties or hardship;
- C. Provided, that the relief can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map.

VII. Compliance with the variance standards

- A. Exceptional situation:
 - 1. Size and dimensions of the existing building on the lot
 - 2. Nature of the existing building and use compared to general fabric of the Historic District
 - 3. Condition of the building
 - 4. Limited options for where additional construction can be located on the site
- B. Practical difficulty:
 - 1. Damage from fire was so severe that the building could not be reoccupied by the Church
 - 2. Nature of contributing building means it cannot be demolished
 - 3. Reuse of the building requires conversion of the property to residential use and development of a feasible project
 - 4. Design constraints imposed by Historic Preservation Review Board dictated that additions should be placed to the rear and south sides of the preserved building where the rear portion of the church will be demolished and where there is an existing asphalt paved area

5. Requiring compliance with minimum yard and court dimensions would adversely impact floor plan of apartment units
- C. No substantial detriment:
1. Existing building has no rear yard; the majority of the existing setback is only 5 feet from the rear lot line
 2. Proposed setback is 15 feet for most of the width of the rear yard
 3. Existing dimension of the north court will be maintained
 4. South court provides adequate light air and ventilation to proposed apartment units
 5. Courts are internal to the building and lower dimensions have no impact on surrounding properties

VIII. Conclusions

- A. Exceptional situation arises from nature and location of existing contributing building on the site
- B. Practical difficulty results from having to keep the front portion of the existing building, thereby dictating where and how additional density can be constructed on the site
- C. Open spaces as proposed provide equal or greater setbacks than the existing condition
- D. The application should be granted

