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To: Board of Zoning Adjustment

Cc: Richard S. Nero, Director of Operations

Concerning Trinity AME Church's request to renew the special exception granted in 1998 by BZA order 16298 allowing the Church to operate parking lots in a residential district

From: Residents and Property Owners at Center and Meridian Streets NW

Dear Board Members:

We, residents and property owners on Center Street and Meridian Place NW, are writing to you to the property owned by Trinity AME Zion Church that is operated as parking lots. We contend that the Church violated the conditions imposed by Board of Zoning Adjustment in 1998 that allowed the Church to operate parking lots on the premises for the members of its congregation and residents of certain blocks of Center Street and Meridian Place. The use of the premises for parking was approved by the BZA in 1998 as a special exception under Order 16298, section 213 in the R-5-B District at premises 1417, 1493 and 1507 (Square 2684, Lots 556, 557 and 558).

We are asking that the BZA not renew the special exception for another 15 years. In view of the Church's failure to fulfill the conditions in the BZA of 1998, we urge the Board members to renew the special exception for two years only and to stipulate that the Church must fulfill the improvements stipulated in the BZA order of 1998.

We contend, and even a cursory inspection of the lots will demonstrate, that between 1998 and today, the Church has failed to undertake any of the necessary improvements to the lots that were stipulated in the 1998 BZA order. Instead, the three lots have become derelict, unsafe and unsanitary. During the past 15 years,

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District of Columbia
CASE NO. 18599
EXHIBIT NO. 30

the lots have been used for illegal and dangerous activities such as drug dealing, prostitution and solicitation and as a dumping ground for stolen cars. Our concerns about the lots have taken on a particular urgency in view of the brutal assault and rape that occurred on one of the lots on May 6. Our recent meetings with the Church's pastor, board members and congregants have been futile.



(A link to additional photographs is on the last page of this document)

While the residents of Center and Meridian Streets do not want to deprive the community or Church members of the use of the lots for parking, the Association does want the Church to carry out the improvements as ordered by the BZA in 1998. This order explicitly stated that the 1993 Parking Agreement be

implemented in full. It is our position that the Church has not complied in full with the BZA order and is not in compliance with the Parking Agreement because over the past fifteen years it has failed to complete any of the improvements required by the BZA in its 1998 order. The Church has fulfilled only its agreement to allow the residents of certain blocks of Center and Meridian streets to use the parking lots when they are not in use by the Church. Indeed, the BZA stated that community access to the lots was necessary in order to permit the transfer of the land to the Church and for the granting of a special exception to operate the three lots as parking lots. In other words, the Church would not have been allowed to purchase the land and obtain the special exception to operate a parking lot without satisfying a community interest, which is parking on the lots.

Among the improvements that the Church was required by the BZA to complete but has not undertaken are the following:

- **Lighting used to illuminate the parking lot is arranged so that all direct rays of such lighting are confined to the surface of the parking lot.** (No lights have been installed on any of the three lots.)
- **The lot will be ... kept clean of refuse and debris.** (The trash is put into two garbage cans, which often overflow, and are emptied once a week on Sunday before Church services. There is often uncollected debris and garbage on the lots and along the fence line until shortly before Church services on Sunday.)
- **The lot is screened from all contiguous residential property by a 2-foot, 6-inch high masonry wall, which is topped by a 42-inch high stockade fence.** (This wall and fence have not been constructed.)
- **All parts of the lot not devoted to parking areas, driveways, access lanes, the attendant's shelter or the screening wall, shall be kept free of**

refuse and debris and shall be paved. The trees on the lot shall be maintained in a neat and orderly appearance. There is no parking lot attendant and therefore no shelter. There is no screening wall and the lots have considerable refuse and debris. There are no trees on the lots and the shrubs on the north side of the second lot are allowed to grow tall and wild. These overgrown bushes have provided cover for illegal activities. The weeds along the tree-line are high and rampant. No landscaping of any kind has been undertaken by the Church.

- **No dangerous or otherwise objectionable traffic conditions shall result from the establishment of the use, and the present character and future development of the neighborhood will not be affected adversely.** We believe that there are objectionable and potentially dangerous traffic conditions prevailing on the parking lots. The parking agreement reserves the right to park on the lots to the residents of Center and Meridian Streets. However, the lots are now being used by commuters, most of whose cars have Maryland or Virginia plates. The lot has become so crowded that it has become difficult for residents to find spaces during the day and in the evening. Also, the haphazard way that cars are parked – for example, in the middle of the lot and obstructing other cars from exiting – will inevitably lead, we believe, to altercations between drivers. The Church has failed to supervise the lots in such a way that parking is restricted to the residents of Center and Meridian Streets. This failure has adversely affected the character of the neighborhood by allowing non-residents unrestricted access to the lots.

The BZA order of 1998 also noted that the ANC 1A voted to support the requested variance to change from residential zoning to parking lots with the following conditions:

1. That the 1993 "Parking Agreement" be implemented in full.
2. That security lights, security gates with passes for community residents and the Church/Community Bulletin Board be installed. (None of this has been implemented)
3. That there been no discrimination in community use of the lots. All bona fide residents of Center Street and the 1400-1500 blocks of Meridian Streets NW are entitled to access on proof of residency. (There is no system in place for proving residency.)

Because of the Church's failure to fulfill its obligations under the BZA order of 1998, we the undersigned residents and property owners of Center Street and Meridian Place ask that the BZA not approve a special exception for another 15 years. In view of the Church's failure to fulfill the conditions in the BZA of 1998, we urge the Board members to renew the special exception for two years only and to stipulate that the Church must fulfill the improvements stipulated in the BZA order of 1998.

Respectfully,

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Below is a link to additional photos of the Church lots.

<https://www.dropbox.com/l/q4fjKMUQKsoEGKCTnqufja>