

To the Board of Zoning Adjustment

I am writing in support of approving the zoning variance for St. Thomas' Parish in Dupont Circle. St. Thomas Parish has existed at the same site since 1894. Throughout its history it has been an asset to Washington DC and the Dupont Circle Community. Reasons for my support include:  
Historical use of the lot: The coverage in the variance request is less than the original coverage of the existing church before it was burned in 1970. The variance approval will restore the lot coverage to the historical use of the lot.

Site represents building complexities: The parish and developer are presented with conditions which make construction difficult. The existing plans incorporate the historical structure of the existing buildings and require building a parking garage under the existing structures.

Project needs to meet the program needs of the parish: The parish has been worshiping in the original parish hall since the fire in 1970. The current structure does not meet the existing needs of the parish in regard to:

- Classroom and office space
- Worship space
- Meeting space for community
- Deteriorating physical plant
- Accessibility for the disabled (no elevator, narrow hallways, and doorways)

Public good for District of Columbia: St. Thomas' has over a 100 year history of supporting the Dupont community and the District of Columbia.

For over thirty years the parish has supported the LGBT community. It provided a welcoming space for spiritual and community needs for the the District LGBT members. In the 80's, the parish was one of a handful of parishes to perform funerals for victims of HIV. Today the parish hosts several community groups and other faiths on an ongoing basis. I am a board member of Samaritan Ministry. Samaritan Ministry helps over 1000 homeless and poor participants a year to find employment, housing, and other needs to improve lives and help people climb out of poverty. The parish has supported Samaritan Ministry for over thirty years. They have provided contributions, donations, and provided space for meetings, workshops, and HIV retreats. Approval of the variance will allow St. Thomas provide greater and more assessible support to the community and the Districe of Columbia.

For the reasons cited above, I strongly support the variance request for St. Thomas' Parish.

Dan Costello

Submitted on 12/14/2015 by:

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