

Board of Zoning Adjustment
1100 4th Street, SW, Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Chairman Heath and Members of the Board:

I am writing to express my strong support for the variance requested by St. Thomas' Parish. I have been a DC resident and a member of St Thomas' Parish since 2011. For the past three years I have served as a member of St Thomas' lay governing board.

We have requested to use 86.7% of the total lot occupancy because of the challenges associated with preserving the exiting historic structures on our lot while constructing the required underground parking. Additionally, the historic church that was burned down by arson in 1970 actually occupied a slightly greater footprint than the percentage of the lot that we are requesting now. St Thomas' Parish has been a part of the Dupont Circle community since 1894 and this new construction will return the church to its original position at the corner of 18th and Church Street.

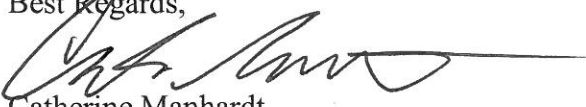
I also firmly believe that allowing this project to proceed will offer great good to the city of Washington, DC. St. Thomas has a long history of service to the public. During the 1960s and 70s, we provided shelter for those protesting war and injustice. In the 1980s and 90s, we cared for people in the midst of the AIDS crisis and we have continued to be a strong voice for LBGT equality, including same-sex marriage. Despite the limitations of our building, we currently host a variety of 12-Step groups throughout the week and provide space for other religious communities to meet and worship.

The building that we currently occupy was not intended to remain a permanent worship space and it is not conducive to the needs of a growing congregation. We do not have adequate worship and programming space to support our congregation (including a growing number of children). The church building presented in this project will solve these issues, while also giving us a space that is large and flexible enough to offer greater service to our neighborhood community.

St. Thomas' truly is a vibrant parish. Our congregation is full of young adults, growing families, and people who are eager to serve our neighborhood and city. My dream for St. Thomas' includes a building that is used every day of the week. I look forward to a time when our members are able to worship, learn, and serve God in a beautiful and functional space-- a space that is also available to our neighborhood for community meetings, educational and cultural events, and opportunities to serve those in need. The variance that we have requested is necessary to make this dream a reality.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Best Regards,


Catherine Manhardt
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Washington, DC 20010

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.19133
EXHIBIT NO.125