

December 14, 2015

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street NW, Ste 200S
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing to support the granting of a variance for a building project proposed by St. Thomas' Parish Dupont Circle. I have lived in DC for 10 years, including 2 years at 19th & Corcoran. As a member of this church, I have seen firsthand how it contributes to the public good, and I believe it could do even more under this project—

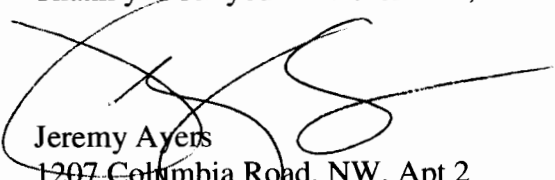
St. Thomas' has been on Church Street and been part of the neighborhood and city for over 120 years. It has been the church of presidents and political leaders, but more importantly, it was a force for social justice in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to its being burned by arson. The church remained in the neighborhood when others left, including caring for AIDS victims in the 1980s and being a voice for the LGBT community since the 1990s. The church is a founding member of Samaritan Ministries that provides services to the homeless of Washington. Many people from the community use the church, including recovery programs, LGBT support groups, and spiritual groups that do not have a place to meet.

The current facilities simply do not have enough room for existing need, let alone plans for expanded use. It is time to rebuild the building and renew the work of this community.

We have engaged in a long, extensive three-year process to determine the needs of our church, which has led to the request for a variance. As I understand it, the percentage of lot coverage we are requesting is actually slightly less than the original coverage of the historic building that was burned. Therefore, I believe the variance request is reasonable and based on a needs assessment that reflects a mission of good for the neighborhood and the city.

Lastly, as a related aside, the city is experiencing a large demand for housing, and there is insufficient supply. This project includes a residential component that would help increase the supply of housing, including a percentage of affordable housing. And by so doing, it would help maintain an active, vibrant neighborhood, generate property and tax revenue, and increase the customer base for businesses in the area.

Thank you for your consideration,



Jeremy Ayers
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