

December 14, 2015

To: The DC Board of Zoning Adjustment

As a resident of Washington, DC since 1989 and a resident of ANC 2B for the past 24 years, I am writing in strong support of St. Thomas' Parish to receive a slight variance from lot occupancy requirements to allow for the construction of an addition for a church and a residential building on our site.

Since living in the Dupont Circle neighborhood, I have been aware of the social services provided by St. Thomas not only to their own members but to the community as a whole. For the past 3 years as a member of St. Thomas, I have witnessed more closely the outreach to the community in creating a better Washington, DC.

St. Thomas' Parish has been on Church Street and been part of the Dupont Circle and Washington, D.C. community since 1894. It once had the most prominent church building in D.C., is a church of past presidents, provided shelter for those protesting war and social injustice in the 1960s and 1970s, cared for people battling AIDS in the 1980s, and has been a leading advocate of social justice, including affirmation of same-sex marriage. Its facilities are heavily used during the week by a wide variety of community groups. Our surviving parish house, which was never designed as a permanent worship home, is no longer adequate for the church's current needs, much less for sustaining a thriving community through the next century.

Our project needs to meet the essential program needs of the parish, as determined through a long and detailed planning process that was conducted three years ago. These essential needs are driving the requested variance in percent of lot coverage.

We have been through much over the past 45 years as a parish with inadequate facilities, and we are not about to go through this multi-year planning process and then end up with a facility that does not support the basic needs that we have identified for engaging in our ministry and mission for the next 100 years.

The percentage of lot coverage for our original building that was burned down by an arsonist in 1970 was in fact just slightly greater than the percentage we are now requesting. So we are not asking for anything new by way of this variance.

I strongly urge you to approve this variance.

Sincerely,

Robert J. McDonald
1520 O Street NW #308
Washington, DC 20005