

Dear Members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment:

I am a resident of Ward 2 and am writing to urge you to support the variance for the St. Thomas building project.

As you are aware, our parish church was burned by arsonists in the early 1970s. The only part of the structure that remained was the Parish Hall that was behind the church building.

On St. Thomas' land parcel stood a massive, towering neo-Gothic church building. In the late 1800s, the City of Washington allowed St. Thomas to build this grand, massive structure in the residential neighborhood, just as it did Foundry United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church, Universalist National Memorial Church, St. Matthew's Cathedral, and the Presbyterian church that was located just south of Dupont Circle (now replaced by office buildings). Our grand church was burned by arsonists. Unfortunately, we cannot afford to re-build a neo-Gothic church in 2015. Equitably, we should be able to re-build a large structure just as our fellow denominations have in current use in Dupont Circle and not be penalized by the misfortune of arson.

We are group of progressive Christians who have been contributing to our community for over 100 years. In recent history, we gave aid to civil protestors and and Vietnam war protestors during the 1960s.

In the 1970s, we pieced ourselves back together from the violence of having our sanctuary space burned to the ground.

In the 1980s, we provided a welcoming sanctuary to Dupont Circle's GLBTQ community. Our Parish provided funerals to AIDS victims when no church would provide funerals during the early, scary days of the epidemic.

In the 1990s, we continued to grow providing space for Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous weekly meetings.

Today, we are Parish full of young families, millennials, Generation X, baby boomers, and the greatest generation. A mix of races and sexualities. The whole array of District residents.

To rebuild our church, we could have abandoned our land to the highest bidder. We would have moved to another location or merged with a nearby Episcopal church with very lucrative proceeds. The whole land parcel would likely have been condos.

Instead, we have chosen to continue to serve the Dupont Circle community and the District at large.

We urge you to support the zoning variance after this long haul to restoration of our building since the 1970s.

The ANC where we are located has several very loud NIMBY voices. They are the reason that

17th Street NW is dying and sometimes resembles a ghost town with tumble weeds, while the east of 17th Street NW is growing and vibrant.

We want to help 17th Street NW re-vitalize and be a beacon of grace and love of welcoming, progressive Christianity in a world full of hateful rhetoric, violence, and despair.

Help us on our journey to restoration and support our variance.

Best regards,

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