

Dear Board of Zoning Adjustment:

I'm writing in support of rebuilding St. Thomas' Episcopal Church.

For the first seven decades of the twentieth century, a large and impressive edifice occupied the lot where St. Thomas' still holds services. Unfortunately, in 1970 an arsonist burned this beautiful Gothic structure to the ground, leaving only the fellowship hall. For 45 years this space has functioned as worship space, fellowship hall, and church offices--and it is simply not adequate for an active congregation in the 21st century.

The church, and the community, now have the opportunity to benefit from a modern, urban approach to meeting two needs. The first, of course, is to rebuild the church. The second is to create living spaces for a growing population in a thriving city.

DC is not the city it was in 2000 when I moved here, and certainly is not the city it was in 1970 when the first St. Thomas' burned. We are now a city where people want to live, and I believe it is imperative that the city position itself to meet the needs of an increasing and changing population.

My immediate concern is with my parish. Our current building has reached the end of its lifespan and a new structure must take its place. Our parish was a national pioneer regarding compassion for those who suffered from AIDS early on in the epidemic, and remains a leader in promoting spiritual acceptance of transgendered people. It has been, and continues to be, one of the best things about Dupont Circle. A new building will allow us to continue to be a positive influence in the community, to minister to those who seek acceptance and to others who are simply looking for a spiritual home in a diverse community.

I urge you to support the proposal to rebuild that St. Thomas' has put forward. I believe the entire project is a win for Dupont Circle and for the city overall.

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