

William T. Syphax Elementary School, dedicated Nov. 7, 1902

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S.C.C.

SYPHAX COMMUNITY CENTER HISTORIC RESTORATION SOCIETY OF SOUTH WASHINGTON, INC.
116 P STREET, S.W. # 1, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20024
(202) 479-4107

Monday, December 1, 2003

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Carol J. Mitten, Chair
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, N.W. Suite 210S
Washington, D.C. 20002

RE: OPPOSITION TO CASE # ZC 03-30

Dear Chairperson Mitten:

On behalf of S.C.C., I am writing this letter to state for the record our opposition to hearing of the above captioned case, and for any variance in the Zoning Regulations that would allow the historic Friendship Baptist Church to be demolished in part or whole, or be substantially altered as to destroy it's aesthetic historic value and significance.

In stating this opposition we would like to advise the Commission as follows:

1. The case should not proceed because review of the public records in addition to testimony given by trustees, pastor, and members of Friendship Baptist Church at the October 20, 2003, ANC 6D monthly public meeting; indicates a cloud on the title that brings into question the true rights, privileges, and whether the parties are in fact owners to subject property as they claim in their application.

2. Contrary to the applicant's submittal on page 16 of the application, the project has less public benefit than the existing structure and does not comply with the recommendations of the Architect of the Capital who has submitted into the record written opposition hereto.

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District of Columbia
Case 03-30
Exhibit 21

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CASE NO.03-30
EXHIBIT NO.21

3. On page three of the application the applicant acknowledges the historic significance of the subject property and site, which is the oldest remaining structure in this area of Southwest Washington, D.C. As part of a completed area of Urban Renewal, the churches significance endured through Urban Renewal and the Redevelopment Land Agency who found enough historical significance to allow the property and site to be of the few remaining structures from the early or original Southwest. In this instance the application fails to meet evaluation standards set in the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital stipulating that the proposed project must not be "inconsistent" with other public policies. [Section 2403 of the Zoning Regulations]

4. On page 11 the applicant depicts the historic structure in a negative and demeaning manner in an effort to gain unfair advantage by prejudicing the Commission's perception of the subject property and site, when in fact the property and site create an aesthetic quality to the area, and the homeless shelter is the subject of the problem not the historic church, and until you remove the shelter, the problem will remain and even increase due to the influx and proximity of new residents. In this instance it is highly inconceivable that the project would accomplish or "carry" the Comprehensive Plan policies of Urban Design of Chapter 7 [712.2(a) or 712.2(b)].

5. On page 2 of the application the applicant states: "For two years the Redeemed Temple attempted unsuccessfully to sell the church and attached accessory building to another religious congregation." However, as indicated on the attached news article (exhibit A), the trustee chair and members of Friendship's congregation testified that Friendship Baptist as note holder was not contacted with any offer to sell the subject property, nor was any for sale sign posted thereon. Friendship was not a part of any meeting with the applicant as they indicated they met with church leaders on page 17 of the application, and had no interest to meet with the applicant, Neither was it Friendship's intent to sell the church for any other purpose than a religious institution.

6. In addition, as claimed on page 2 by the applicant, the asbestos existing on the exterior of the subject property is completely contained and serves as no threat to the health and safety of the immediate community unless you start demolition.

7. S.C.C. is in the process of filing a Historic Landmark application for the subject property, and shall forward this information to the Commission as an addendum.

For these and other reasons, S.C.C. voices it's opposition to the above matter coming before the Zoning Commission; request party status hereto, or, in the alternative request submission of oral and written testimony in any future hearings before this public body.

Respectfully submitted,

Ahmed Assalaam

Ahmed Assalaam, Program Director