

February 4, 2009

Mr. Anthony Hood, Chair  
District of Columbia Zoning Commission  
One Judiciary Square  
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210S  
Washington, DC 20001

# 08-34

2009 FEB - 4 11:11:37

Re: Return to L'Enfant PUD Application ("PUD Application" or "Application")  
Center Place Holdings L.L.C. ("Applicant")

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission:

On behalf of the Archdiocese of Washington and the Holy Rosary Church, the purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention a number of concerns about the referenced PUD Application. The Holy Rosary Church is located adjacent to the proposed PUD site near the intersection of 3rd and F Streets, N.W. We are requesting that the Commission delay consideration of a set down on the Application until our concerns are fully addressed by the Applicant.

Our first concern relates to the fact that the PUD Application continuously refers to an F Street "right of way" adjacent to the Holy Rosary Church and proffers the reopening of that "right of way" as a key benefit of the PUD. In fact, currently, there is no right-of-way adjacent to Holy Rosary. This section of F Street was closed in 1967 when the adjacent center leg section of I-395 was constructed and title to that land reverted to the Archdiocese pursuant to a land exchange with the District of Columbia. In the exchange, the District acquired Archdiocese land located behind the Holy Rosary Church for the new highway. Since that land contained the Church's rectory, the District conveyed the entire closed F Street land to the Archdiocese for a new rectory and annex building. The Church subsequently constructed those improvements in the closed right-of-way and there they remain today.

Despite Holy Rosary's deep reluctance to once again demolish and reconstruct its rectory and annex at a new location, the Archdiocese and Holy Rosary have been negotiating in good faith with the Applicant to arrive at a mutually agreeable plan which will allow the PUD project to proceed and which will also preserve and protect Holy Rosary Church's historic buildings and its prominence as a center for Italian-American culture in the Washington, D.C. area. (A recent *Washington Post* article which chronicles Holy Rosary's historic significance as a center for Italian culture is attached

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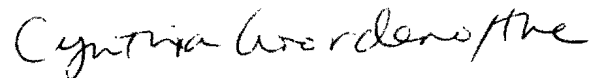
hereto for the Commission's information). However, an agreement between the parties has not yet been reached.

The PUD Application is misleading and flawed in a number of respects regarding the Archdiocese's and Holy Rosary's interests. Not only does the Application imply that the former F Street area owned and improved by the Archdiocese and Holy Rosary is an existing right-of-way but it also shows a portion of the PUD project parking garage located under this Archdiocese land. Further, it appears that the PUD project utilizes FAR which is generated by this land and relies on reestablishing a street there to support the 130 foot height of the proposed adjacent PUD development. Finally, the proposed PUD plans show new rectory and annex buildings located behind the existing Holy Rosary Church, with approximately half of the new buildings located within the PUD and the other half of the buildings (literally split down the middle!) located outside the PUD. At the very least, this bifurcating of the proposed new Church replacement buildings poses unprecedented and questionable review and enforcement issues for the Zoning Commission, the Zoning Administrator and the Archdiocese.

For all of the above reasons, the Archdiocese urges the Commission to delay further consideration of the Application until these deficiencies in the Application are adequately addressed and until the Archdiocese, Holy Rosary and the Applicant can conclude their negotiations regarding a potential land swap and relocation of the Church's rectory and annex buildings.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Cynthia A. Giordano

Enclosure

cc: Office of Planning  
Robert H. Braunholer, Louis Dreyfus Property Group  
ANC 6C

# The Washington Post

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## washingtonpost.com

The Washington Post

January 10, 2009 Saturday  
Regional Edition

**SECTION:** METRO; Pg. B09

**DISTRIBUTION:** Maryland

**LENGTH:** 941 words

**HEADLINE:** Church Is Home Away From Italian Home

**BYLINE:** Emily Langer; Washington Post Staff Writer

**BODY:**

Most of the weekend, empty federal buildings and vacant streets make the Judiciary Square neighborhood feel like a ghost town. But not on Sunday mornings, when hundreds of Italian Americans are drawn to Holy Rosary Church and find a piece of the old country.

The 10:30 Mass is said in Italian and regulars greet each other with European-style kisses on each cheek. Last Sunday, celebrating the Feast of the Epiphany, worshipers welcomed one another with new year wishes of "Buon anno."

The thriving Renaissance-style church is more than an oasis in blocks of offices. It is a long-established venue in an ongoing mission of the Catholic Church: serving Catholics in their native languages and customs wherever they are living, even as it struggles with a shortage of priests.

Seven of the 140 parishes in the Washington archdiocese are designated as ethnic, meaning their official purpose is to serve a particular ethnic group rather than a neighborhood. Holy Rosary is the oldest, dating to 1913. Others, established in the 1970s and 80s, serve Polish, French, Korean and Spanish communities. Newer parishes serving Vietnamese and Portuguese Catholics were created in the 1990s. The archdiocese also includes Chinese, Croatian, German, Nigerian and Haitian missions, which are less permanent than parishes but have their own pastors, said Susan Gibbs, a spokeswoman for the archdiocese.

"The challenge of the church is, how do we keep adapting to meet the pastoral and spiritual needs [of immigrants], growing with them as they assimilate, and how to be flexible enough to meet the challenges of the next community that comes in," Gibbs said.

The history of Washington's ethnic parishes helps tell the story of its immigrants. St. Patrick's, at 10th and G streets NW, for example, was founded in 1794 for the Irish stonemasons who helped build the Capitol and the White House, but shifted to a neighborhood church as the Irish assimilated into American life.

Among the newest ethnic communities in the archdiocese are the Haitians at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart, near 16th and Irving streets NW, and Our Lady of Sorrows in Takoma Park, which were formed from 1998 to 2000.

But Holy Rosary, which serves a relatively small community of immigrants who arrived in the United States many years ago, raised children who may not speak Italian and gradually dispersed to the suburbs, is part of a "dying breed" of ethnic churches, said Chester Gillis, author of "Roman Catholicism in America" and theology professor at Georgetown University.

As members of these churches become more grounded in the United States, the parishes' roles also change. There are fewer Masses said in native languages, smaller numbers of priests who are immigrants and less cultural attachment through parish dinners and socials that celebrate ethnic customs.

Holy Rosary has hung on by remaining an anchor in the lives of many parishioners, even those who have lived here for decades.

Anthony Cascioli, 78, and Ernesto Davella, 80, left their homes in the southeastern Italian town of Roseto half a century ago. Today, they come to Holy Rosary from Montgomery County to visit with 10 other families from the same town -- their "paesani," or fellow villagers, as the two men call them.

Among the paesani is Phil Finelli, of Rockville, whose father was born in Roseto and immigrated to the United States in 1932, working with Cascioli as an ironworker. Finelli and his wife, Joanne, had their children baptized at Holy Rosary and recently celebrated their 25th anniversary there. They attend the Italian Mass at least once a month.

Holy Rosary "is very special because there is a rootedness here," said Joanne Finelli, as she sat at a table in Casa Italiana, next door to the church, with statues of Michelangelo, Dante, Verdi and Marconi at the entrance.

Built in 1981, Casa Italiana serves as the congregation's meeting place and as a center for Italian culture, with language, art, ceramic, mosaic and wine classes open to the public. Last Sunday, as usual, the parishioners gathered there after Mass for cappuccino. They stayed until after the noon service for a special Italian Epiphany tradition: a visit from the Befana, an ugly, old woman who rides a broomstick and delivers candy to "good" children.

"I like it here," said the Befana, also known as Liliana Polo, 64, before sneaking out of the hall to don a headscarf and colorful skirt, then heading back in with a sack of goodies. Born in Vicenza, in northeastern Italy, Polo has attended Holy Rosary since 1966. Almost every Sunday, she travels more than an hour from Berryville. "It's like going home," she said.

Watching the scene at Casa Italiana, as parishioners lunched on pizza made from scratch by Anna Falcone, who came to the United States with her sister 48 years ago and met her husband of 46 years at Holy Rosary, the pastor could barely contain himself.

"So what do you think of our piazza?" the Rev. Lidio Tomasi asked. That's what he considers Casa Italiana: a town square where people meet to exchange information and, on occasion, gossip.

Tomasi also sees the private sides of his congregants. Even those who speak English often prefer to make their confessions in Italian, he said. When he gives someone last rites, he offers to do so in either language. Almost everyone chooses Italian.

Holy Rosary will mark its 100th birthday in five years, shortly before one of its oldest parishioners, 93-year-old Irene Vignola, celebrates hers. Vignola came to the United States 55 years ago and speaks little English. When asked what it feels like to hear Mass in her own language, she responded with one word:

"Splendido."