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16632

November 04, 2000

Jerrily R. Kress, Director
D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, NW, Suite 210-S
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Application 16632

Dear Director Kress,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the zoning variance application noted above, which is the subject of a public hearing on 28 November, and to urge the Board of Zoning Adjustment to deny the variance from parking requirements requested by the Medhane Alem Eritrean Orthodox Church at the premises of 4700 14th Street, NW. As a resident living on Crittenden Street within a few hundred yards of this property, I have grave concerns about permitting the church the proposed parking variance. Among my concerns are the following:

- **No fewer than five churches already are located within three blocks of the site of this church, creating a serious parking problem in the neighborhood.** When existing churches hold services and events, neighbors find their driveways blocked, visibility reduced by churchgoers parking illegally close to corners, and double-parking blocking our roads. Granting the requested variance for this 120-seat church would only multiply that problem.
- **Residents on nearby streets -- Decatur, Crittenden and Buchanan -- generally do not have off-street parking at their disposal, making available street parking essential to our community.** Many of our residents also have more than one vehicle. A zoning variance would unfairly compete with residents for needed parking.
- **While the neighborhood association and ANC have sought a community meeting with the owner of the property for several months, it has not come to pass.** I feel it reflects poorly on the intent of the owners to have avoided these opportunities to meet with the neighbors, and am concerned that any future problems that occur will meet with the same avoidance.
- **The property owner has commenced with renovations and repairs to the property without a proper license to do so.** A visual inspection of the property shows that construction has commenced on the premises, using a retail permit, which is inappropriate to the purpose of a nonprofit religious community. I believe this demonstrates a scofflaw approach which does not bode well for future activities of the owner.
- **The property, situated on the corner of 14th and Crittenden, anchors a neighborhood business district.** As such, it figures as a primary property in the neighborhood's ongoing efforts to redevelop this area of 14th Street to bring needed services and businesses to our residential community. The church would displace such businesses, and its parking needs would compete with properties that could bring economic renewal to our area. The zoning variance would undo many months of work by our neighbors and neighborhood association to establish a vision and goals for this set of properties, and it does not fit within the community's stated goals.

I respectfully ask that the Board take these comments into consideration and reject the proposed variance. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your consideration of this issue, which is so important to our community.

Sincerely,

Denise T. Graveline Stout

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BZA
Case No. 16632
Exhibit No. 23

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16632
EXHIBIT NO.23