SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION TO ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION ANC 4A BY LYNN BERGFALK OF CITY GATE

BZA Application No. 16826 -- 5917 16th Street, NW

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Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. I am Lynn Bergfalk, the Executive Director of City Gate. We have an application before the BZA for a special exception to permit church programs at 5917 16th St. NW, which for many years was the location of St. Luke's Serbian Orthodox Church. Our use of this building would be similar, although less intensive since we would not have large numbers of people coming on Sundays or for special occasions.

A church is a by-right use in a R-1 district, but church programs are a permitted use which requires a special exception from the BZA, and approval is granted only for 3 years, and then application must be made for re-approval. Approval by BZA requires that the church programs:

- shall not be organized for profit, but exclusively for the promotion of the social welfare of the community.
- that the programs be conducted in the existing church building (and we are not proposing an addition or alteration to the existing building).
- that at least 75% of the persons conducting the programs are to be volunteers.

Further it specifies that the operation of the program shall be such that it is not likely to become objectionable because of noise and traffic. The proposed church programs conducted by City Gate at this location would meet these requirements.

The general mission of City Gate is to help those who often find themselves on the fringes of our society to access the benefits and participate more fully in the life of the larger community. This gate swings both ways, and we also provide volunteer opportunities for those in the mainstream of society to share their time and resources with those on the margins of our community. This mission is carried out in partnership with various churches and with the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, and involves several sites. The activities at 5917 16th St. NW would be strictly limited to church programs meeting the stated requirements of the applicable zoning section (#216) for what would be permitted in an R-1 residence district.

We are a faith-based 501 (c ) 3 non-profit organization created in October 2000 by Calvary Baptist Church in downtown DC., where I served as Senior Minister for 13 years before assuming leadership of this new organization. Calvary's long history of serving the needs of the city is a commitment that I and the City Gate organization continue to share. I come to you with a commitment and sensitivity to our city and its various neighborhoods. For nearly 15 years I have lived and worked in the District. Our four children have attended District schools, and I understand the questions and concerns that neighbors have about ministry or social programs in terms of traffic and noise, and the people who would be served by such programs. We believe we can demonstrate at

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every point that City Gate will be a good neighbor and that our presence at 5719 16th Street will contribute to the well-being of the community and neighborhood.

Let me make clear that City Gate as an organization sponsored by Calvary Baptist Church is not looking to move programs from a downtown church into a residential area. We would plan to do several neighborhood-based programs such as ESL classes and a tutoring and mentoring program for neighborhood kids. However, most of the programs we are involved with or will be involved with will be at other sites. Right now those sites include Johenning Baptist Community Center in SE, Calvary Baptist downtown, and Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church at Tenley Circle, NW.

City Gate partnership with the District of Columbia Baptist Churches specifically is to coordinate volunteer ministries, and much of the church program conducted at 5917 16th St. would be related to our work with volunteers. This building is a large, detached house that for 25 years housed the St. Luke's Serbian Orthodox Church, and prior to that, I am told, housed a Jewish organization and the Peruvian embassay.

St. Luke's used the upper 2 floors as residences for church workers. They had their chapel and church office on the ground floor, and kitchen and fellowship and Sunday School space for children in the basement. City Gate would use the building in a similar fashion, the upper floors as residential, and the lower floors for small, neighborhood based programs, and for study and training for small groups of volunteers. [See separate attachment for program details.]

How will the neighborhood be affected by City Gate's presence at the corner of 16th and Olgethorpe?

First, we believe our presence and programs will have a positive effect on our neighborhood and city. In addition to neighborhood families who will benefit from after-school tutoring or ESL classes, our presence in general will be an asset to the community. [Note: City Gate's presentation to the ANC followed two hours of presentation and discussion about (mostly, the problems related to) alcoholic beverage licenses.] We note that we are not dealing with large numbers of people, and that program participants would consist primarily of neighborhood residents benefiting from tutoring or ESL programs, or volunteers who have an active commitment to serve others.

Second, street parking along our corner lot on Olgethorpe is sufficient for seven vehicles, plus we have a 2 car garage at the rear of the lot. This parking is sufficient for our daily program use, and occasional monthly meetings (when we would have a few additional cars) would all be at times when parking on 16th St. is permitted, should additional parking be needed. Our times of heaviest use would still involve significantly less traffic or parking than St. Luke's church would have required for weekly services or special events.

Overall, we do not believe there would be any negative impact on traffic, parking or noise from City Gate church programs. As stated, our presence likely will have less impact in these areas than when St. Luke's was occupying this site.

We specifically want to address the importance of protecting the residential character of the 16th Street Heights neighborhood. A large number of buildings related to church, school, diplomatic or other institutional uses are evident along 16th Street. Please note we are not asking the BZA to convert a residential property to institutional use, but for permission to carry on church programs in an existing church building. This building went up for sale last spring when the DC real estate market was at its hottest. It was a MLS listing with a For Sale sign prominently displayed in front. Several open houses were held.

It was nearly 90 days after the original listing that City Gate succeeded in placing a contract on the property, indicating at that time there were not buyers willing to convert this building back to residential use. The fact is this building has not been used as a residence per se for many, many decades. The basement and ground floor are configured for institutional use, and it would be expensive and impractical for most people to make the extensive changes necessary for a private dwelling.

Given the likelihood that 5917 16th Street is going to continue to be used for some sort of institutional purpose, it is difficult in our judgment to envision uses more compatible and positive for the neighborhood than the church programs proposed by City Gate.

We believe we are a good fit for this community.
We will have some programs that will directly benefit neighborhood residents.
Our impact on traffic, noise, or parking will be minimal.
We will have people living in the upper two floors who will be part of the neighborhood, who will be around during the day as well as at night, who will sit out on the front porch, who will know their neighbors, and who you can call on the phone or speak to in person if there is any need, or a question about our City Gate programs.

Since BZA authorization is limited to a 3 year period, the neighborhood can be assured of accountability and review, and the knowledge that re-approval for these programs would depend upon the demonstration over the next 3 years of what we have presented here.