

Washington, DC Office of Planning  
801 North Capitol Street, NE Ste 4000  
Washington DC 20002  
Fax: 202-727-6072

Re: ZC 08-09

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in my capacity as a local bishop in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) with some perspective on the topic of your upcoming zoning decision. I am also writing from my perspective as an academic researcher in community development and the value of community-facing religious organizations. The essence of my comment is that having an LDS chapel in the neighborhood--any neighborhood--can be a boon to the community. I offer the 1992 opening of my own local chapel in Maryland as a type for the good that can come to your community with the arrival of an LDS church.

My congregation is comprised of citizens in Rockville, Germantown and Gaithersburg, Maryland. Our chapel is located in a community of Gaithersburg known as Kentlands, a planned community that supported the construction of an LDS building because of the added benefit it was expected to--and indeed did--bring not only to Gaithersburg, but to Montgomery County. For example: At no charge, Gaithersburg city elections regularly use our chapel as a polling station. At no charge, Montgomery County has used our chapel as its busiest polling station. Because their synagogue is not large enough to accommodate everyone present on certain occasions, the neighboring Jewish congregation, at no charge, uses our chapel to celebrate all of its high holidays. At no charge, local girl scout organizations, not affiliated with our church, use the chapel for weekly meetings and special family days. At no charge, music teachers hold student recitals to accommodate student families and friends. At no charge, we have made arrangements with the Montgomery County division of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to make our chapel available as a gathering place, a communications and command center and a temporary refugee housing facility in the event of a disaster, a role that dozens of LDS chapels in the southern states filled during Katrina. This list could go on a bit, but the message is consistent. We are a community-oriented church and demonstrate that on a regular basis by the way we open our buildings to the community.

On a related note, let me also say that we try to be a community oriented people. Last month our youth organization distributed, as they do every year, thousands of fliers in support of a community cause-based fun run. We have also held in our building a number of free seminars, open to the public, on such topics as emergency preparedness, safety and security, family history, food storage and fighting pornography. Every Saturday morning, we hold English classes, open to the public, for non-native English speakers, regardless of their religion. In addition, we have opened up our building to community projects to gather food and clothing for the needy, assemble Tsunami relief

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kits, collect shoes for kids in Afghanistan and to make commendation blankets for wounded service men at Walter Reed. And this list goes on as well.

I strongly believe that having an LDS chapel in your midst will do nothing but enhance the safety and stability of your community. I happen this week to be participating in a seminar in the U.K. attended by community development professionals from every continent. The message I am hearing is clear: deliberately managed, well-run religious organizations can greatly augment government programs to enhance and protect neighborhoods, and at a fraction of the cost of equivalent social programs. In the 16 years that I have been a member of our local church in Gaithersburg, I have seen and heard nothing but kudos and thanks from the broader community and expect that you will have the same experience by allowing an LDS chapel to be opened in your community.

I am grateful for your time and consideration of this message. I am more than willing to answer questions about the typical community use of our Gaithersburg facility and will be available to do so after Sunday evening, September 21.

With kindest regard,



Bishop Scott C. Knell  
Kentlands Ward  
Washington DC Stake  
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## Fax Cover Sheet

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