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September 22, 2008

DC Office of Planning  
VIA FAX: 202-727-6072

RE: Case #ZC 08-09

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to urge you to reject the proposal to expand the zoning overlay that would essentially prevent the LDS Church from building on the property it purchased from the Catholic Church at 16th and Emerson Streets, NW. The LDS Church purchased this property with a clear understanding of the zoning regulations in place, and has designed a building that meets and even exceeds the expectations outlined therein. The neighbors' concerns about parking have been more than addressed (at a significant expense) to include 73 spaces where only 25 are required.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be a good neighbor and its presence will enhance the community. The building will be good looking, well cared for, and contrary to the "mega-church" model, it will draw its membership entirely from within the city. The building will not be used for any other purposes that might draw traffic, such as a school or day-care center.

The congregations that will be served by this building are currently housed in a small and woefully inadequate building in Mount Pleasant. The severe lack of space in the current building prevents important children and youth ministries and scouting programs from flourishing and fully providing young people with the support they need.

As a 16-year resident of the District of Columbia, I have learned to live among its many churches. Some are good neighbors, and some are not. I remember one particular Sunday on Capitol Hill when my car was blocked in by parishoners of my neighborhood church who had illegally double-parked, thus preventing me from being able to attend my own church. It was frustrating. On the flip-side, the church at the other end of my block used to allow me to come and play their piano in the evenings. I have fond memories of the positive interactions I had with members of my neighbor church during that time. I have seen first-hand how our community is enhanced by the diversity of its worshipping populations, and I support all of our local community churches, as they add color and dimension to the fabric of our city.

The 16th Street corridor has long been famous for welcoming faith groups of all types and traditions; I would hate to see this era of openness to come to a close with disputes over this particular building. I urge you to maintain the current zoning and to allow this building to be constructed.

Sincerely,

  
Catherine Stirling

ZONING COMMISSION  
District of Columbia

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