

Written Testimony for Case No.24-16, Grace Reformed Church

From Lucky Roosevelt <samarkand13@aol.com>

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To DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ) <DCOZ-ZCSubmissions@dc.gov>

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Dear Members of the Zoning Commission,

As a member of the Roosevelt family—my late husband, Archie Roosevelt, Jr., was a grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt—I am writing to express my deep and personal objection to the proposed rezoning of Grace Reformed Church in Washington, DC.

This church is not merely an old building, it is a sacred part of our nation's heritage. Grace Reformed Church was the spiritual home of President Roosevelt during his years in office. He laid its cornerstone in 1901 and spoke at its dedication in 1903. Designed by Paul J. Pelz, the architect of the Library of Congress, the church represents a remarkable intersection of American architectural, civic, and religious history.

To allow this site to be rezoned for redevelopment—particularly for commercial use—would be an immense disservice to the people of Washington and to the legacy of a President whose life and leadership helped shape modern America. As someone connected both personally and historically to this legacy, I find the prospect deeply disappointing and alarming.

The building, though currently vacant, remains an enduring testament to a more reverent and civic-minded era. Its beauty still shines through, from the craftsmanship of its architecture to the splendor of its stained glass. What message would it send to future generations if we allowed such a place to be erased from the landscape in pursuit of short-term development interests?

This is a moment that calls for historical responsibility and civic vision. The District of Columbia has long been a national leader in historic preservation. I urge the Zoning Commission to uphold that tradition and reject the proposed rezoning. Doing so would preserve a space that could once again serve the community—not only as a house of worship, but as a site of learning, reflection, and inspiration.

President Roosevelt once wrote to the church's pastor: "After a week of perplexing problems and in heated contests, it does so rest my soul to come into the House of the Lord and worship and to sing and mean it, the Holy, Holy, Lord, God Almighty." These are not just poetic words, they reflect a sentiment that still rings true and speaks to the church's enduring role in public life.

I respectfully implore you to honor the history, the architecture, and the national significance of Grace Reformed Church. It is not only worth saving—it is our duty to preserve it.

Sincerely,

Ambassador Selwa 'Lucky' Roosevelt
Former U.S. Chief of Protocol for the Reagan Administration