

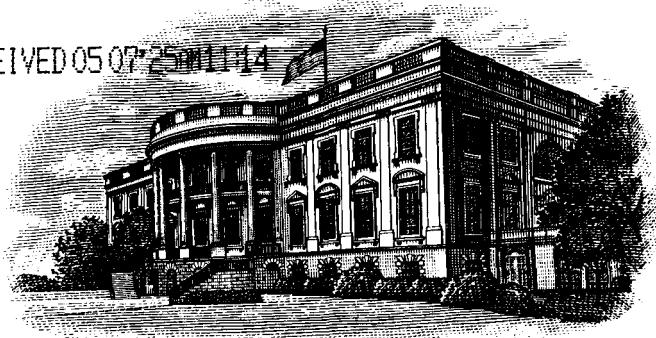
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**THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

May 6, 2025

D.C. Zoning Commission
Office of Zoning
441 4th Street NW
Suite 200-S
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Members of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission,

I am writing regarding Zoning Commission Case Number 24-16. As President of the White House Historical Association, I write to urge you to reject the proposed rezoning of Grace Reformed Church, a site of profound historical and cultural significance to our nation's capital and its enduring legacy. Our mission is to preserve and share the rich history of the White House and its connections to the broader historical fabric of Washington, DC. Grace Reformed Church, with its deep ties to President Theodore Roosevelt and its architectural distinction, is an irreplaceable part of that legacy.

The preservation of Washington's historical sites is not merely an act of nostalgia; it is a commitment to ensuring that future generations can learn from and be inspired by the places that shaped our nation's story. This is a compelling consideration on the eve of celebrating America's 250th anniversary, as we reflect on the values and legacies that define our shared history. Grace Reformed Church is no ordinary structure—it is one of a select few "presidential churches" in the United States, intimately linked to Theodore Roosevelt, whose transformative leadership left an indelible mark on American history. President Roosevelt laid the church's cornerstone in 1901 and spoke at its dedication in 1903, underscoring its significance as a place of worship and reflection during his presidency. Designed by Paul J. Pelz, the renowned architect of the Library of Congress, the church stands as a testament to the intersection of faith, civic duty, and architectural excellence.

The proposal to rezone this sacred site for commercial redevelopment represents a shortsighted approach that prioritizes fleeting economic gain over enduring historical value. Such a decision would erase a tangible link to our past, diminishing the city's unique



ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.24-16
EXHIBIT NO.26

character and its role as a steward of national heritage. In contrast, a church or ministry willing to restore Grace Reformed for its original purpose offers a path forward that honors the building's legacy while ensuring its continued relevance as a place of community, worship, and reflection. Preservation, not redevelopment, is the responsible choice.

Theodore Roosevelt's connection to Grace Reformed Church imbues it with a significance that transcends its physical structure. His words to the church's pastor—"After a week of perplexing problems...it does so rest my soul to come into the House of the Lord and worship"—reflect the sanctuary's role as a haven for one of America's most consequential leaders. To allow this site to be lost would be to sever a vital connection to the Roosevelt legacy and the values of service, stewardship, and reverence that he embodied.

The District of Columbia has long set a national standard for historic preservation, safeguarding sites that tell the story of our shared past. Grace Reformed Church, with its exquisite stained glass and masterful craftsmanship, remains a vibrant symbol of that heritage. We respectfully request that the Zoning Commission reject the rezoning proposal and uphold its commitment to preserving this extraordinary landmark for the benefit of present and future generations.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter. The White House Historical Association stands ready to support efforts to protect Grace Reformed Church and other sites of national significance in our capital city.

Respectfully,



Stewart D. McLaurin
President