

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Rodney Cook <rcook@thenmf.org>
Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 4:29 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Zoning Commission Case No. 24-16

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THE NATIONAL MONUMENTS FOUNDATION

MILLENNIUM GATE MUSEUM

To the Zoning Commission and Government of the District of Columbia,

I write to you as a former Commissioner of Fine Arts to express my strong opposition to the proposed re-zoning of Grace Reformed Church, one of Washington's most historically and architecturally significant landmarks.

Grace Reformed Church, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, holds a sacred place in our nation's heritage. It was the spiritual home of President Theodore Roosevelt—who personally laid its cornerstone in 1901—and a house of worship attended by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The church was designed in the distinguished Late Gothic style by Paul J. Pelz, architect of the Library of Congress. In a letter dated August 11, 1903, Pelz described the church as “more artistic than any church in this city,” a sentiment echoed by those who recognize the exceptional sculptural and architectural quality of the building.

Roosevelt's pew remains in the sanctuary today—a tangible reminder of a president who sang every hymn, listened intently to sermons, and supported the church with personal gifts and letters. His words, written at the church's dedication, remind us of its true purpose: *“This church is consecrated here to-day to duty and service, to the worship of the Creator... so that we may feel that we have done our part in bringing a little nearer the day when there shall be on this earth a genuine brotherhood of man.”*

To consider re-zoning this sacred and historic site for commercial redevelopment is not only inappropriate—it is profoundly short-sighted. An even more sad state of affairs as there is a church that

has been negotiating in good faith to purchase it. Such an action would violate the spirit of stewardship expected of those entrusted with preserving our city's cultural and historical assets. This is not an abandoned building. It is a consecrated space with a living legacy and a church that stands ready and willing to purchase the property and carry its mission forward.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to reject any attempt to re-zone Grace Reformed Church for commercial use. Allowing its transformation into a commercial venture would not only desecrate a House of God—it would set a dangerous precedent for the treatment of Washington's irreplaceable heritage.

Sincerely,

Rodney Mims Cook | President