

Written Testimony - to be Presented at Case No. 24 - 16

From Chris Moerman <chris@gfc.tv>

Date Wed 5/21/2025 7:13 PM

To DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ) <DCOZ-BZASubmissions@dc.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the DC Government. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know that the content is safe. If you believe that this email is suspicious, please forward to phishing@dc.gov for additional analysis by OCTO Security Operations Center (SOC).

Some people who received this message don't often get email from chris@gfc.tv. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good afternoon, Commissioners.

My name is Chris Moerman, and I serve as the Lead and Founding Pastor of Grace Capital City Church located here in Washington, D.C. I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak today and voice my opposition to the proposed rezoning and commercialization of Grace Reformed Church.

This is not just a matter of land use. It is a question of how we honor our history, protect our architectural legacy, and preserve sacred spaces that have served our city for generations.

Grace Reformed Church, completed in 1902 and designed by Paul J. Pelz—the same architect who co-designed the Library of Congress—is one of Washington's finest remaining examples of Romanesque Revival church architecture. Its stonework, original stained glass, and wood-carved interiors are more than aesthetically significant—they represent the craftsmanship and spiritual aspirations of a past generation.

But more than its architecture, it is a place rich with historical meaning. It was the church home of President Theodore Roosevelt during his presidency. He worshipped here regularly, not in grand ceremony, but quietly and faithfully, as part of this community. His presence, his pew, and his connection to the church remain as living testimony to the values of public service, moral integrity, and civic responsibility.

And yet, despite this deep historical and spiritual importance, Grace Reformed has suffered from years of neglect by those entrusted with its stewardship. The previous owners failed in their responsibility on many levels. Their first failure was in allowing this sacred space to deteriorate—left open to the elements, overrun by rodents, and stripped of care. This wasn't just a failure of maintenance—it was a failure of responsibility. Owning a building like this is not merely an asset to manage, it is a trust to uphold. And that trust was broken in pursuit of maximum profit.

Their second failure was that despite having competitive offers from churches that would restore the building and maintain its cultural and spiritual legacy, they chose a path that would see its important interior completely gutted and commercialized.

Our church is a multi-ethnic, multi-generational congregation and we have made serious and ongoing efforts to purchase and restore Grace Reformed. We have a vision not to turn it into a commodity, but to bring it back to life as a place of worship, community service, and spiritual refuge. We stand ready to do the work.

The idea that no congregation is willing to take on this project is false. We are here, we are willing, and we are prepared.

To approve this rezoning is to reward neglect and disregard for the public good. But we ask you instead to consider the higher ideals—those that elevate a city beyond mere economics. In places like this, a community finds identity, continuity, and hope.

As Theodore Roosevelt once said:

“The things that will destroy America are prosperity-at-any-price, peace-at-any-price, safety-first instead of duty-first.”

Let's choose duty. Let's preserve what matters.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Chris Moerman

Lead Pastor - Grace Capital City

www.gracecapitalcity.com

@chrismoerman