

Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, DC
474 Ridge Street NW, Washington, DC
www.mccdc.com
(202) 638-7373

October 7, 2019

Jamie Weinbaum
Executive Vice President
4800 Montgomery Lane, Suite 600
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

Dear Mr. Weinbaum:

Thank you and Mr. Robert Johns, Director of Community Relations, for joining us on September 15, 2019 to provide MCCDC members and guests with an overview of your planned redevelopment of 1200 5th St NW Washington DC. Your presentation and answers to the questions from our congregants were appreciated and helpful. Thank you also for the follow-up information you provided including the Shadow Study.

Since our founding in 1970, we have strived to provide a welcoming and safe home for worship and community. We have strived to be a good neighbor and community hub for many organizations and groups. For example, in addition to our own ministries, we provide space for another faith community, NA meetings, We Are Family that provides meals to those in need, child care services, and rehearsal spaces for area musicians and artists.

One of the significant moments in our church history is the development of our current location at 5th and Ridge Sts. and the construction of our current church home. Our church was specifically designed for MCCDC to incorporate the symbolism and significance of openness to our community. Given our special ministry to the LGBTQIA community the open glass – an integral part of the sanctuary – sends a powerful message that we are no longer going to be in the shadows. In fact, our unique architecture is what led to *USATODAY* in 2017 to name our church building as one of 25 must-see buildings in Washington, D.C.

This is a critical message even today as our society has grown more open and affirming. Still today, people in our Trans Community continue to be murdered. People in our community continue to be subjected to hate crimes and hate speech, job loss, and harassment and turned away from other places of worship. We have had an important and supportive role in the ongoing work to end HIV/AIDS with so many of our congregants impacted over the decades. Still today, we host funerals, memorial services, and weddings for those other churches will not host. We have become the host for critical events such as the Transgender Day of Remembrance each year. An integral part of all of these has been the openness and visual access via the glass design of our church. In fact, our interior lighting is designed to account for the natural light we receive by our design.

We also recognize that new development and change is at times not only needed, but desired. And, we also welcome the potential of new neighbors and residents in the community. Therefore, our interest is to work with you to find solutions to mitigate the potential negative impacts on MCCDC and the surrounding community and boost the potential positive impacts your development may have. To that end, as many of our congregants raised, our key concerns are:

- **Affordable, maintained housing** – It is critical as there are changes in our neighborhood to ensure meaningful inclusion. That includes good choices for people and families with limited means to live. We want to ensure a healthy percentage of the units are designated for low income housing, reflecting the diversity of our neighborhood. We appreciate your commitment to this but encourage you to consider incorporating more low-income opportunities. In addition, it is critical that once the new development is completed, it is properly maintained.
- **Parking** – A critical part of our mission includes respect for and nurturing the environment. Encouraging more use of public transportation, carpooling, bicycles, etc...is important to us. And, to that end, many of our members and guests do look for alternative methods to MCCDC. However, we know that others do not have those options or those options can be impractical. Creating 360 new apartments (many of which will house multiple people) but only incorporating 100 parking spaces, is concerning. While some new residents may choose to not own a car, other units could have residents with multiple cars. The parking in the community is already difficult; the potential addition of hundreds of additional cars, has the potential to create significant problems – not only for MCCDC, our neighbors and other faith communities around the new development but for your future residents. We would encourage you to re-evaluate the number of parking spaces you provide in your development and consider a number that will further mitigate the impact on street parking. We would also ask that you consider partnering with us in exploring alternative parking solutions in the vicinity that may help to resolve this issue in a way that could be mutually beneficial. We would also request a breakdown of units by occupancy to have a better understanding of the total number of actual residents your new development may house.
- **Visual Noise/Pollution** – As mentioned, our glass exterior is not simply a nice architectural element, but a critical symbol of visibility for a community that historically has been invisible. The construction of a building of the height and density you propose will have a direct impact on that symbolism and a very practical impact on our use of our sanctuary. During Sunday services, for example, we rely upon the natural light that comes through our glass and very clearly from the Shadow Study that light will be impacted. Even evening and night time services and events we host will be impacted – the lighting from the new development is an unknown and will likely result in lighting into our sanctuary. Our sanctuary is unique in that it is our primary event space. We use it not only for services, but also for concerts, workshops, funerals, weddings, and other events and activities. As a result, we will likely have to take steps to explore how that impact on lighting *inside* our church can be addressed – possibly having to invest in mitigating solutions. We would request that you re-evaluate the density on

5th Street, or, at the very least, work us with to explore mitigation solutions. While we appreciate the Shadow Study, as requested at the meeting, we would also request a rendering or visual of what the development will look like if viewed from inside our sanctuary. We also request information on the lighting scheme as well as more specifics on trees which could help to mitigate the impact.

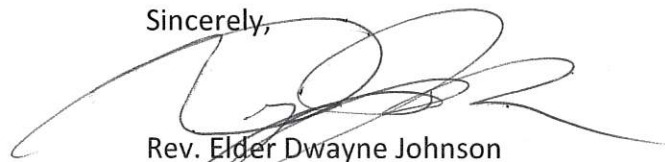
- **Communication/Construction** – As discussed, if the planned redevelopment proceeds, it will be critical for there to be ongoing communication before, during and after construction. Given the size of the new development, there will be significant activity with construction trucks, noise, rodents, and related activity. During this time, we ask that at least one point of contact for MCCDC and our neighbors be provided us. We request that this point of contact is someone who has the authority to act on and address concerns. We ask that your schedule is shared so we know when major activities will occur that could impact events and activities at the church – including when major noise and street congestion may occur.
- **On-going Communication** – We would also request that following the opening of the new apartment complex you provide MCCDC and our neighbors with ongoing contacts that can help address any concerns or issues that may arise in the future.

Again, we appreciate you taking the time to meet with us. We do not believe the issues we have identified are insurmountable and hope that if we can work to identify solutions, the development and its future residents will find a livable community they are pleased to call home.

To continue our dialogue and to provide answers to any of the questions, concerns, or information requests, please contact myself at (202) 638-7373, RevDwayne@mccdc.com, our Associate Pastor Rev. Cathy Alexander at RevCathy@mccdc.com or Johanna Hardy, At-Large Member, MCCDC Board of Directors (brassrat93@gmail.com). We would also suggest a follow-up meeting with our Board of Directors to discuss these topics in more detail.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Rev. Elder Dwayne Johnson
Senior Pastor

Cc: ANC Commissioner Rachelle Nigro (6E04)