



Government of the District of Columbia

Neil O. Albert

Deputy Mayor for Planning and
Economic Development

December 4, 2007

Historic Preservation Review Board
441 Fourth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Landmark Designation Case No. 91-05
Third Church of Christ, Scientist and Christian Science Monitor Building

Dear Members:

I am writing to express the opposition of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development to the proposed historic landmark designation of the Third Church of Christ, Scientist and Christian Science Monitor Building.

I believe that the following points should be given particular consideration by the Historic Preservation Review Board (“HPRB”) as it considers this case in advance of its December 6, 2007, meeting and public hearing:

1. The original landmark application based its case on four main points, three of which appear to have been accepted as incorrect by both the applicant and the Historic Preservation Office. The only remaining argument is that the site is a preservation-worthy example of brutalism and/or modernism. The label of “brutalism” has been disputed by the original architect, and the District has numerous other examples of modernist buildings which do not involve the imposition of such a burden on a religious institution.
2. The Church structure was built only 35 years ago, and “sufficient time” has not passed “to permit professional evaluation of them in their historical context” — as required under 10A DCMR § 201.3. This is especially true given that the structure and site have been deemed non-contributing to the Sixteenth Street Historic District.
3. The relevant Advisory Neighborhood Commission has formally expressed by unanimous vote its opposition to the proposed historic landmark designation. Under HPRB rules, “[t]he officially adopted written views of

Letter to HPRB
Case No.91-05

Advisory Neighborhood Commissions shall be accorded great weight in the historic preservation process.”

4. The most important historic feature in the immediate area is L'Enfant's planned boulevard of Sixteenth Street leading to Lafayette Park and the White House. The strength of this grand avenue is weakened by the existing bunker-like concrete structures. The Sixteenth Street Historic District could be significantly enhanced by the streetscape unification and redevelopment of the Third Church site with the adjacent site to the north.

In addition, it bears noting that the Church, the owner-occupant and a local religious institution for nearly a century, firmly opposes the landmark, and there is substantial risk that a landmark designation could force Third Church to move out of its church and possibly out of the District. The proposed redevelopment project, on the other hand, will allow Third Church to maintain its commitment to the District by constructing a new home at the current site.

While my Office solidly appreciates the importance of protecting important historic sites and structures, in this case I believe that the designation of this property is not in the overall interests of the District.

Sincerely,



Neil O. Albert