



Third Church of Christ, Scientist
Washington, DC

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November 27, 2007

Mary Fitch, Director
Washington Chapter, American Institute of Architects
1777 Church Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Ms. Fitch:

On December 6, 2007, the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) will continue its hearing of the application of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City and the DC Preservation League for landmarking our church. Our members oppose the landmark designation and think that it is not warranted.

Enclosed are four documents which we would appreciate your making available to those in your community who might be interested in this case.

The first is a report from EHT Traceries, an architectural historian firm, which concludes, "...the Application misstates the fundamental history, design and context of the Properties. To summarize, the Application inaccurately links the building campaign with the national church movement; misrepresents the relationship between Christian Science theology and architecture; incorrectly associates the buildings directly with I. M. Pei; and misunderstands the style and design. In addition an examination of the sources in the bibliography of the Application reveals that more than a quarter of those listed have no relevance to the history of significance of the Properties. Thus, there is sufficient confusion and error as to a number of fundamental facts in the Application; therefore the landmark designation on the basis of this Application would be inconsistent with D. C. historic preservation regulations."

The second is testimony prepared by Avery Faulkner, FAIA, a former President of your chapter and a former Chairman of the AIA's Historic Resources Committee. He had planned to give the testimony before the HPRB in a hearing which was scheduled and postponed many times in the 1991-1992 time frame. There was hope that a solution satisfactory to all parties could be found. Alas, it has not and Mr. Faulkner has passed away in the interim. Mr. Faulkner states in part, "It is my belief that this site as designed and as constructed not only fails to carry out the architect's plan but is in conflict with the context of the area and the historical significance of 16th Street approaching Lafayette Square and the White House." While his testimony was prepared for an earlier time, we feel it remains relevant today.

Third is a *Washington Post* piece written by architecture critic, Wolf Von Eckardt, titled "New Church Design: Rude, Brutal, Military, Uncivilized," which we feel gives an accurate evaluation of the structure from an architectural standpoint. We feel his evaluation addressing the exterior of the building is particularly important as the current landmark application applies only to the exterior, not the interior.

Fourth is a *Washington Post* piece by Benjamin Forgey which while complimentary in a sense, to us points out enough deficiencies to defeat the application, e. g., "...the rough, mean way the church building addresses I Street: There's a fire door and those imposing concrete walls. Strolling by, one thinks, irresistibly, 'bunker'---a forbidding impression that colors one's perception of the whole complex." We have particular concern with Mr. Forgey's concluding statement, "There's a simple test one can apply: Stand in front of such a building, close your eyes and picture it gone. If the result is that you would really, really miss it, then it may need help. For me the complex at 16th and I streets passes the test, every time." Apparently the complex didn't pass the test for Mr. Von Eckardt and we don't see such criteria as useful in considering landmarking. We are thinking that there are other preservationists and architectural historians and critics who would also feel this way.

You can obtain further information at www.thirdchurchfreedom.org which should be accessible early this week. We would be most happy to meet with any in your chapter for whom you think further discussion would be useful. This is a very important issue for us, a community organization which has been located within six blocks of our current location for 87 years, and we would like to ensure that our reasoning on the issue is heard and given adequate consideration.

Sincerely,



Lois Khairallah, Chair
Board of Trustees