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MEMORANDUM

TO: Stylianos Christofides and David Stern, ICG Properties

FROM: Emily Eig, EHT Traceries Inc.

SUBJECT: Review and Analysis of the D.C. Application for Historic Landmark for Third Church of Christ, Scientist and the Christian Science Monitor Building

DATE: October 3, 2007

The purpose of this memo is to review and comment on the D.C. Application for Historic Landmark (the “Application”) for Third Church of Christ, Scientist and the Christian Science Monitor Building (the “Properties”), submitted January 1991 by the Committee of 100 (the “Applicant”). Research conducted in September 2007 shows that there are material errors in the Application. The scope of the work conducted by EHT Traceries included review and analysis of the Application but does not include an evaluation of the significance of the Properties.

The methodology used by EHT Traceries included reviewing the Application and its citations and also conducting additional primary research in the form of interviews with representatives from Third Church of Christ, Scientist and with Araldo Cossutta, the architect for Third Church and the Monitor Building working as a partner in the firm of I.M. Pei & Partners. In addition, EHT Traceries did further secondary research to gain a better understanding of the Christian Science movement as well as the spectrum of Mr. Cossutta’s work.

The primary conclusion of the research to date juxtaposed with a close examination of the Application for the two buildings is that the Application misstates the significance of the buildings. Initially, it is important to note that the Application incorrectly attributes ownership of both buildings to The First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston, Massachusetts, when in actuality the original and current owner of the church building is Third Church of Christ, Scientist in Washington, D.C. The incorrect attribution of ownership lays a foundation for other inaccuracies throughout the Application. By making incorrect assertions, the Application presents a flawed argument regarding the Properties’ significance.

The Application is based on four central assertions which our research has proven to be incorrect. In the following sections we address the errors in order:

1. Complex as part of the national church movement

The Application asserts a strong and deliberate relationship between the buildings' design and the Christian Science religion. In addition, the Application views the construction of this church building as a late and local example of the national church movement in Washington, D.C., as well as an opportunity for a downtown presence for Third Church of Christ, Scientist in Washington, D.C.¹ The national church movement was characterized by a desire by a denomination to establish a national presence in Washington, D.C. Typically, the church building created to fulfill this purpose was constructed with funds raised from congregations across the country. According to the current membership of Third Church, the construction of the new church building was due to expansion and programmatic needs, rather than to make a statement regarding its downtown location.² Regarding Third Church's position as part of the national church movement, an interview with current Third Church members provided a comprehensive explanation of the organization of Christian Science. The organization of Christian Science is not national and Third Church of Christ, Scientist in Washington, D.C., is a local congregation. While all Christian Science branches and societies are guided by the same Church Manual, each congregation manages its own affairs and local ministry efforts. According to Third Church members, the concept of this building program as an example of the national church movement is impossible due to the fundamental organization of the Christian Science movement.

Information from the archives of Third Church, provided by Third Church, suggests the construction of a new church building at one time appeared to be part of a program for a national presence of the Christian Science movement in Washington, D.C., but not as part of the national church movement. Correspondence from the Board of Trustees of Third Church of Christ, Scientist, suggests that the aspiration for a national presence in downtown Washington, D.C. was an objective of Third Church rather than The Mother Church. Third Church had been organized as a downtown church since its founding in 1918 and likely viewed its location and the surrounding local community as part of its ministry of works. An early mention of the role and location of the proposed new Third Church building is mentioned in a June 1953 letter from the Board of Trustees of Third Church where they wrote: "Recognition was given to the need to provide for our own church home in Washington and also the need of a downtown church in the nation's capital where visitors from all parts of the United States as well as from all parts of the

¹ D.C. Landmark Application, p. 310.21/2.

² Interview with current members of Third Church of Christ, Scientist on September 14, 2007.

world would find an adequate reflection of church.”³ In 1962, the Board of Trustees of Third Church reiterated the position of the church as serving, in part, a national function when they wrote: “Feeling keenly the need for a downtown church edifice which will be representative of Christian Science and easily accessible to the people in the center of our Nation’s Capital, the member of Third Church at a meeting on December 3 voted to go forward to build a new church edifice in the most desirable downtown location available in the city of Washington.”⁴ In 1964, in a draft announcement for the fund drive for the construction of the new Third Church, the Board of Trustees wrote: “This church has a currently active building program which will enable it to more adequately serve Christian Scientists and visitors in the downtown area of our nation’s capital.”⁵ This language supports the idea that part of the mission of Third Church was to serve downtown needs, rather than a direction from The Mother Church to create a national presence.

2. Theological roots for design of Third Church of Christ, Scientist

The Application asserts that the design of Third Church was rooted in theological beliefs based on Christian Science doctrine. An article in the *AIA Journal* from October 1963 entitled “A Guide for Planning Buildings for Christian Science” by Milton Grigg offers insight into the architecture of Christian Science. Grigg explains that “the Christian Science Church does not publish any mandatory requirements” and that “stylistically there is no characteristic idiom.”⁶ This article supports comments made during a recent interview with Third Church members that the design did not reflect Christian Science beliefs nor the congregation, such as suggested in the nomination’s claim that the “building was initially envisioned as a round structure with an open interior space symbolizing the unity and community of the congregation.”⁷ In support of Third Church’s position, Cossutta stated that “architecture and theology are not necessarily related.”⁸ Furthermore, Cossutta expanded on the topic by saying that a religious building should have a spirit and a sense of serenity, but that he was not directed by Third Church to do so specifically. He felt that this sense of spirituality could be achieved through form, material and geometry. When questioned, Cossutta rejected the claim that

³ Letter from Board of Trustees, Third Church of Christ Scientist, Washington, DC, to Board of Directors, The First Church of Christ Scientist, Boston, MA, 23 June 1953.

⁴ Letter from Board of Trustees, Third Church of Christ Scientist, Washington, DC, to Board of Branch Churches of Christ, Scientist, Washington, DC, 27 December 1962.

⁵ Draft of announcement in a letter from Board of Trustees, Third Church of Christ Scientist, Washington, DC, to Norman Holmes, Dept. of Branches and Practitioners, Boston, MA, 24 August 1964.

⁶ Milton Grigg, “A Guide for Planning Buildings for Christian Science,” *AIA Journal*, vol. XL, no. 4, October 1963, p. 95.

⁷ Interview with current members of Third Church of Christ, Scientist on September 14, 2007; and D.C. Landmark Application, p. 310.21/7.

⁸ Interview with Araldo Cossutta, New York City, September 18, 2007.

he had been inspired by the Baptistery in Florence, Italy. Rather, Cossutta explained that the building he designed made reference to Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois, which he had visited a few years prior. This establishes a direct relationship between Third Church and modern American religious architecture while disassociating any significant connection to the Baptistery in Florence, Italy. As a result, the association of the design lies with the architect's aesthetic rather than with Christian Science doctrine.

3. Association with I.M. Pei

The Application asserts a strong relationship between I.M. Pei and Third Church that did not exist. For example, the Application states that "The Third Church complex contains one of the few churches designed by Pei, and is an outstanding example of Pei's work in Washington, D.C." An interview with Araldo Cossutta, architect of Third Church and the Monitor Building, reveals little influence and no participation by I.M. Pei on this project. It was confirmed by Cossutta⁹ that partners in the I.M. Pei firm enjoyed a very high degree of design independence and latitude in their work. Third Church and the Monitor Building were entirely Cossutta's work not Pei's.¹⁰ The Application has extensive background material on Pei and his career which is not relevant in light of the facts presented above.

4. Understanding the style and design

Regarding the design of Third Church, the Application erroneously describes the building stylistically as "brutalist." Araldo Cossutta said that was the wrong word to describe the building and that Third Church was an example of skilled architectural engineering.¹¹ This building follows in the form of Le Corbusier's *beton brut* (raw concrete) style which referenced the choice of material and execution, rather than the style. Brutalism, as an American style, took on a different meaning as harsh, angular and rough and is exemplified by Paul Rudolph's Yale Art and Architecture Building and Boston City Hall by Kallmann McKinnell & Wood.

The interview with Cossutta provided fresh insight and clarification into the design scheme for the Properties and site. Cossutta's design for the Properties derived from what he described as "the ugly wall" of the adjacent office building (1600 K Street). A key component of his design was to site the Monitor Building in a way so as to screen

⁹ Interview with Araldo Cossutta, New York City, September 18, 2007.

¹⁰ During the interview, Cossutta confirmed this and acknowledged that in his separation agreement with I.M. Pei, credit for this project would be explicitly given to Cossutta.

¹¹ Interview with Araldo Cossutta, New York City, September 18, 2007.

Third Church from the exposed south elevation of 1600 K Street, while creating space for Third Church.¹² The Application considers the plaza as derivative of Pei's interest in gathering spaces in front of European cathedrals; Mr. Cossutta explained that his intention to create space for the church and a pedestrian-oriented urban space. Mr. Cossutta discussed his growing interest in the juncture of urban planning and architecture for the creation of an integrated building site. However, this was not achieved at this location because an additional adjacent lot integral to the original design was never acquired. The Application asserts that the plaza is a successful design component ("the octagonal shape of the church permits easy circulation around it and invites people into the plaza area").¹³ While it is true that Cossutta originally envisioned the plaza as "a livelier urban event," he nonetheless concluded that for many reasons the plaza became a "dead-end" and "a sad space."¹⁴ Today it is clear that the plaza continues to be an isolated and cut-off outdoor space on one of the city's busiest streets.

Conclusion

A thorough analysis of the Application comes from intensive research of the parties involved including Third Church of Christ, Scientist and Araldo Cossutta, as well as an extensive understanding of other factors, such as the Christian Science movement. As demonstrated above, the Application misstates the fundamental history, design and context of the Properties. To summarize, the Application inaccurately cites ownership of the Properties; mistakenly 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 or significance of the Properties. Thus, there is sufficient confusion and error as to a number of fundamental facts in the Application; therefore landmark designation on the basis of this Application would be inconsistent with D.C. historic preservation regulations.

¹² Interview with Araldo Cossutta, New York City, September 18, 2007.

¹³ D.C. Landmark Application, p. 310.21/7.

¹⁴ Interview with Araldo Cossutta, New York City, September 18, 2007.