



ST. THOMAS' PARISH

DUPONT CIRCLE • WASHINGTON, DC

Frequently Asked Questions about St. Thomas' Building Project

St. Thomas' Parish has been on Church Street and been part of the Dupont Circle and Washington, D.C. community since 1894. It is a church of past presidents, provided shelter for those protesting war and social injustice in the 1960s and 1970s, cared for people battling AIDS in the 1980s, and has been a leading advocate of social justice, including affirmation of same-sex marriage.

As it celebrates 121 years as a church community on this site, St. Thomas' remains proud of its legacy and is excited about its future!

Why can't the church stay in its existing space? The current space, which was never designed as a permanent worship home, is no longer adequate for the church's current needs, much less for sustaining a thriving community through the next century. The only financially feasible plan is to rebuild on part of the property where the previous church stood, and to finance

this through the sale of the remainder of the church's property.

Did the church consider the needs of its neighbors when it decided to develop its property? Yes, and the church was very careful to select a developer who knows the neighborhood well, has a strong track record in working with the community on development projects in historic neighborhoods, and has experience with historic preservation. Several neighbors have voiced their conviction that their property values will increase, given the church's plans, and that the long-term stability of the neighborhood will be better served by a modern, functional church building than by aging ruins and a decaying building.

How much of the church's property is being sold to the developer? The church has signed a purchase and sale agreement with the developer, CAS Riegler, to sell roughly 2/3 of its property. St. Thomas' will continue to own the property on which its new church building will stand. The church and the developer will also share

and jointly manage a single level of underground parking.

Why can't the church keep the park?

The park is where the church's original neo-gothic building stood before it was destroyed by arson. The church has considered many different approaches to rebuilding on its property, and under any of those scenarios the park land would need to be used. Also, maintaining the park in good condition is expensive and can even be dangerous. In recent years there have been at least three physical attacks on church staff members by persons in the park. Both the church and the Diocese of Washington have determined that the land on which the park and current church facilities reside is St. Thomas' Parish's most valuable asset, and that this asset must be used to the greatest benefit of the future of the church.

Will the church preserve the ruins? Yes.

The members of St. Thomas' care strongly about historic preservation, and the parish has committed to integrate elements of the ruins of St. Thomas' sacred spaces into the new design, as has been described in our design package submissions to the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB). St. Thomas' and our partners plan to preserve the Church Street façade and the majority of the Parish Hall. In addition, we plan to make use of the original altar inside our new church building, understanding its most sacred value and place in our new worship space, and returning it indoors to its original purpose. Fragments of the reredos that have not been too severely damaged by weather will be displayed as artifacts in the

interior, allowing parishioners and visitors to experience an element of St. Thomas' legacy as they enter the new building. We will also incorporate our 1893 cornerstone into the new building.

How much larger will the church's new worship space be? The exterior footprint of the church will be modest in comparison to its original building, its previous plans, and other existing churches in the Dupont Circle community. The total square footage of the current facility is 9502 and the new church will have about 20,700 square feet (GSF). (This does not include the square footage of the residential building.) The square footage of the current sanctuary is 1790. The square footage of the proposed new sanctuary is approximately 2800 square feet. The seating capacity of the current worship space is approximately 136. The seating capacity of the proposed new sanctuary is 170 seats, including the seating at the altar area and in the choir area.

How much parking is required for this amount of seating? By D.C. code the church needs 17 parking spots for the amount of seating in its new sanctuary.

Why does the church need such a big new building? Compared to other urban churches (for example, Foundry United Methodist Church at 1500 16th St. NW, or First Baptist Church at 1328 16th St NW), St. Thomas' proposed building will not be large. Besides the need for adequate worship space for both current and future members, the church is in dire need of rooms for educational and community gatherings that are currently very difficult

or impossible to host. The children's programs, as well as the various 12-step programs that meet weekly at the church, need space that is not in conflict with the church's other activities. St. Thomas' needs a fully-accessible space for all its functions, including providing a D.C. polling place and a meeting site for the ANC and other Dupont Circle organizations. The church needs additional space for its administrative staff and clergy, some of whom do not now have dedicated workspaces. Catering and other community events that involve larger groups, such as weddings, funerals with coffins that need to be moved, art exhibits, and concerts, are limited, and the church's spaces are not able to accommodate persons with ADA requirements; this limits the church's ministry and disqualifies it from hosting diocesan-sponsored meetings. Space is also needed to support outreach and advocacy programs for human rights and reconciliation. Being an active witness to Christ's love has been and will continue to be an important part of the church's mission. The new facility will be "bigger" mostly in the sense that it will be able to accommodate more of the activities that fulfill its core mission as a church community.

Why were two different sets of architects involved? An initial design for our new church building was prepared in 2013 by MTF Architecture. In late 2014, the church selected Hickok Cole Architects to prepare a new design for the church. Hickok Cole is now St. Thomas' architect for the new church building and also CAS Riegler's architect for the residential building.

Can't the church raise funds in other ways besides selling part of its property to a developer? Several years ago the church pursued a fundraising campaign with professional consultants who had extensive experience in working with churches, in an attempt to raise the funds to build a new church building without a sale of a portion of the land. However, after much research and effort the church was not able to raise sufficient funds to build either a new worship space or to go beyond that, as planned, and renovate its existing facilities. The church has no reason to believe that a new fundraising campaign would have a different result. The church has carefully and prayerfully chosen its current path and has determined that this is the only viable option for rebuilding the church.

Have you tried asking Bishop Gene Robinson to help you raise funds? Bishop Robinson is a member St. Thomas' Parish and its Bishop in Residence, and he has both contributed generously to the church's capital campaign and raised significant funds for the project. He is a strong supporter of the church's current plan.

What amount of financial resources does the church need? It is the policy of the church not to disclose financial information or discuss its financial matters with outside parties. However, the purchase of a portion of its property by the developer, in combination with the funds the church has raised both externally and internally, will provide the church with the facilities it needs to adequately support its

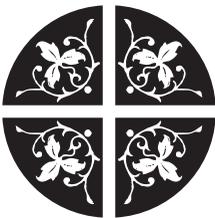
programming, while leaving it without significant long-term debt. This is a break-even arrangement for the church that will not generate funds beyond what is needed to build a new space that can meet both its near-term and long-term needs.

Can't the church use alternate spaces to host expanded programming?

Using alternative spaces is not a long-term solution for the church; that is in fact what it has been doing for the past 45 years. The church's identity requires a space where its community can continue to be built up and grow—a coherent space for its programs and ministries, as well as for its neighbors and some of the activities that help generate a

sense of being a neighborhood. Also, the church's current, aging facility will make increasing capital demands on its budget that already compete with programs and staff needed to carry out its mission.

Why doesn't the church just sell the P Street lots it owns to obtain the extra financial resources needed to build a smaller church or renovate its current facility? The P street lots are part of the agreed-upon property sale to the developer. They would not provide adequate funds even to renovate the space the church now has, which in any case would still be too small to accommodate the church's needs.



If you have a question that is not listed here,
please send it to:

building@stthomasdc.org

A response will be provided as quickly as possible.

These FAQs are also available online at:
stthomasdc.org/buildingquestions