

Cars = Auto Financing = Event Tickets = Jobs = Real Estate = Online Degrees = Business Opportunities = Shopping

Search

How do I find it?

Subscribe to paper



Home News Travel Money Sports Life Tech Weather

Become a member of the USA TODAY community now! Log in | Become a member What's this?



News » Religion

D.C.: Modernist church can be demolished

Updated 5d 15h ago | Comments 24 | Recommend 5

E-mail | Save | Print | RSS



Enlarge By Jacquelyn Martin, AP

Darrow Kirkpatrick, a reader at the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, discusses the historic church's structure in Washington. It can be demolished because its upkeep is so expensive it would eventually bankrupt the congregation, a city official has ruled.

WASHINGTON (AP) — A historic downtown Washington church that more closely resembles a concrete bunker than a house of worship can be demolished because the structure's upkeep is so expensive it would eventually bankrupt the congregation, a city official has ruled.

Members of the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, located just a few blocks from the White House, have spent months in federal court fighting for a permit to raze the boxy modernist church they say is unwelcoming and impractical because of its huge concrete faces, sharp angles and few windows. But preservationists say the church, which forsakes a traditional steeple and nave, embodies the 1950s and '60s architectural style and should remain intact.

FULL COVERAGE: Latest news at faith.usatoday.com

In a decision filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court, D.C. planning director Harriet Tregoning said despite the building's designation as a historic landmark, church leaders should be allowed to replace it. Church members have welcomed the ruling.

The decision has "basically freed us from the bunker," said Eric Rassbach, an attorney for the church.

FAITH & REASON

Blog: Join the conversation on religion, spirituality and ethics | Forum: Debate fellow readers



FIND MORE STORIES IN: United States | Washington | White House | I. M. Pei

The church was built in 1971 and is based on the design of architect Araldo Cossutta, who worked with the firm of the famed architect I.M. Pei. Pei's Washington buildings include the widely admired East Wing of the National Gallery. But the church's design was mostly the work of Cossutta, who also designed the Christian Science Mother Church building in Boston.

Tregoning, acting on behalf of D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty, cited several problems with the church's construction, including the use of uninsulated concrete and defective workmanship. The congregation would need to pay for ongoing repairs to keep it functional, she said.

The situation could drain the church's funds and lead to its demise within eight years, Tregoning wrote. The complicated design also makes it difficult to convert the church to be used for something like a museum.

There's one caveat to the city's ruling: The church must first obtain a building permit for its new structure at the same site before it receives the demolition permit. Darrow Kirkpatrick, chairman of the church's redevelopment committee, said church officials will now work with architects to develop construction plans.

The congregation has sued to fight the historic landmark status, saying the designation limits members' ability to freely practice religion.

Rebecca Miller, executive director of the D.C. Preservation League, said there are unexplored alternatives that would maintain the historic building. The group will likely appeal the decision, she said.

Copyright 2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Share this story:

Mixx it Yahoo! Buzz Digg Newsvine Reddit Facebook What's this?

Posted 6d 18h ago

Updated 5d 15h ago

E-mail | Save | Print | RSS

To report corrections and clarifications, contact Reader Editor Brent Jones. For publication consideration in the newspaper, send comments to letters@usatoday.com. Include name, phone number, city and state for verification. To view our corrections, go to corrections.usatoday.com.

Guidelines: You share in the USA TODAY community, so please keep your comments smart and civil. Don't attack other readers personally, and keep your language decent. Use the "Report Abuse" button to make a difference. Read more.

You must be logged in to leave a comment. Log in | Register

Related Advertising Links

What's This?

- Mixx it Other ways to share: Yahoo! Buzz Digg Newsvine Reddit Facebook

What's this?



Daily Briefing E-mail Newsletters


Sign up to get:

- Nation's top news Money, Sports, Life, Travel, Tech and more



Sign Up Now

Empty comment input box with a scroll bar on the right side.

Submit  Post this comment to Facebook?

Comments: (24) Showing:



thereisnoGOD (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 4d ago
slimdave you took the words right out of my mouth, burn them all down and the world will be a better place.

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



slimdave420 (7 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 4d 22h ago
newmexicocraig (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1d ago
slimdave420 wrote: 10m ago
There's nothing historic or redeeming in any church. tear them all down.

That's that lefty 'tolerance' we hear so much about.

I don't claim to be the voice of the left. Unlike you 'righties' that claim to speak for jesus. I'm anti religion has nothing to do with right or left.

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



WillyBoy (41 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 4d 23h ago
Is that an ATM kiosk out front?

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



WillyBoy (41 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 4d 23h ago
Demolish it and return the property to the tax rolls.

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



gottessegen (42 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5d 13h ago
"he structure's upkeep is so expensive it would eventually bankrupt the congregation,"

I'd always thought if God is in something, the financial aspect is the last thing you have to worry about. Maybe this is a statement about the validity of this belief?

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



in_not_of (1 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5d 14h ago
reap what you sow, sorry

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



in_not_of (1 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5d 14h ago
You sow what you reap. Bad theology breeds bad architecture in this case.

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



Kitty Boots (1552 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5d 15h ago
What kind of congregation would build a church that resembles a concrete bunker? That's taking fear to an extreme.

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



mercurius (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5d 16h ago
1970s isn't old enough to be truly historic unless it was something amazingly impressive.

[Recommend](#) | [Report Abuse](#)

