

February 24, 2026

By Email Only

Baltimore City Planning Commission
417 East Fayette Street, Eighth Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202
c/o: eric.tiso@baltimorecity.gov

Re: City Council Bill #26-0147 – Landmark List – St. Peter’s Cemetery

To the Members of the Planning Commission:

I write today on behalf of St. Peter’s Cemetery (the “Cemetery”) in anticipation of the February 26, 2026 hearing of the Planning Commission to consider pending legislation for the landmark designation of the Cemetery, which comprises two parcels at 2310 Laurens Street and 1301 Moreland Avenue.

By way of brief background, the Cemetery was established in 1851 and stopped accepting burials in 1965. There are no plans to accept burials at any point in the future. Much of the Cemetery is wooded and provides one of the most robust green canopies in the City, creating an ecosystem that has been studied by biologists for years. Beyond that, the Cemetery is not unlike most cemeteries in City and the Archdiocese of Baltimore. It is the eternal resting place of people with a diverse range of races and social economic background, with those interred at St. Peter’s including African Americans and Irish immigrants.

The Cemetery has a modest endowment fund from the past sale of St. Peter the Apostle Church. This restricted fund yields an annual budget for upkeep and maintenance that is often supplemented by other Archdiocesan resources. The Archdiocese took over management of the Cemetery five years ago and placed the property under the care of New Cathedral Cemetery. Since that time, there has been an increased care and attention to the Cemetery through a consistent lawn mowing operation, removing dead trees and fallen limbs, and cleaning up any debris. And while some areas of the Cemetery continue to be overgrown based on the wooded nature of the property, staff is moving at a deliberate pace to ensure that there is adequate support within the scope of the endowment and the Archdiocese’s supplemental resources to maintain any newly cleared spaces. Put another way, once wooded land is cleared from the Cemetery, the maintenance and upkeep budget must be able to keep pace with the cleared property and the process is very deliberate to ensure that pace continues.

The Cemetery is grateful to CHAP and Councilman Bullock for their concern and attention to the sacred burial ground of Baltimore City residents, in particular those interred at the Cemetery. **However, the Cemetery is reluctant to support an elevation to landmark status.** It is the policy and committed view of the Archdiocese that no governmental or other outside authority should be

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granted the right to override the Church’s decision as to the proper use or prioritization of religious funds or property. Under Church Canon Law, only the Archbishop of Baltimore can approve or disapprove modifications to a cemetery but a landmark designation would override such authority, depriving the Church of its Constitutionally protected right of practicing religion free of government direction. *See Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act* found at 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc(a)(1) *et. seq.* We also wish to note that decades of cemetery operations have shown the Archdiocese that grant dollars that may come with a CHAP designation are not typically available for ongoing maintenance or available to supplement the endowment support the Cemetery currently enjoys here.

Initial review of the scope of proposed CHAP oversight in the Landmark Designation Report also gives the Cemetery significant pause. The Cemetery is concerned that both legally and logistically there will be incredible challenges to CHAP overseeing “alterations to existing [] grave markers,” as CHAP intends to under its Report related to this designation, given that such markers belong to and are maintained/overseen by the families of decedents—not the Cemetery. *See Md. Code Business Regulation § 5-503(e)(1)* (“The owner of a burial lot is responsible for the care of a memorial or monument placed on the burial lot.”). At its February 10 hearing, CHAP heard these concerns and committed to exploring an MOU process between the Cemetery and CHAP regarding practicalities for oversight of the Cemetery. The Cemetery is grateful for this opportunity but wishes to still make its concerns known herein.

Please understand, it is the Catholic Church’s mission to honor the sacred places where the dead are buried. Further, the Catholic faith calls the Church to honor the lives of the departed through perpetual care of burial places like the Cemetery. The Cemetery is not just a property, but a sacred, consecrated place for the Church’s faithful, holding the remains of those destined for eternal life. Indeed, the Consecration of the ground transforms the land into a shrine memorializing those buried there. The Cemetery takes the obligations that come with this Consecration seriously and asks for the continued ability to carry out its responsibility over such grounds.

With regards,



Collin Wojciechowski