

A PAGE FROM THE LONG AND
AMAZING HISTORY OF ST. STEPHEN
AND THE INCARNATION EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Urban Village

A Gift for the Neighborhood

Washington's Episcopal Church of St. Stephen and the Incarnation is in the narrow, racially mixed belt that separates Washington's black ghetto from its white community. Just north of the 1968 riot area, the tall, brown brick church has been engulfed by urban redevelopment. Last week the parishioners of St. Stephen and the Incarnation voted overwhelmingly (137-2) to do some urban developing of their own. They will give the three church lots—1.28 acres, valued at \$300,000—as the core for a new "urban village."

Other churches have given away property or sold it for token prices, but most have then moved to the suburbs. St. Stephen's parishioners propose no such thing. Led by its activist pastor, Father William Wendt, 50, the congregation will be a minority shareholder in a new redevelopment corporation and work actively with other neighborhood groups. The major goal: to acquire more land and build a 200-unit apartment complex (from efficiencies to five-bed-

Time Magazine May 11, 1970

In 1969, St. Stephen's parishioner and vestry member George Hart stood before the congregation and said, "St. Stephen's Church can be free only when it humbles itself before its own God and divests itself of its ideology that places property above people and goods above God." Hart was a member of the Black United Front, which was demanding reparations for slavery from all D.C. churches.



George Hart and Bill Wendt

St. Stephen's response was crafted by the Rev. Edgar Lockwood, a member of the church's clergy team. The church would sell its three parcels of land on Newton Street to a trust that would develop the land for the benefit of the community, with the church renting back space for worship. The congregation endorsed the plan. Over the next five years, economic and political realities caused the plan to evolve, until **in 1976 ground was broken to construct today's Urban Village Apartments**. The first tenants moved in two years later.



While the community/church partnership envisioned at the beginning never became fully developed, St. Stephen's parishioners and Urban Village residents had some success through the Urban Village Corporation (UVC), which was formed in 1970 to have some control over the development of the project. When Conrad Cafritz, the builder of Urban Village, tried to turn the complex into market-rate housing when the project's tax credits expired in 2001, St. Stephen's and the UVC fought to maintain Urban Village. Urban Village was purchased by Eagle Point/Somerset Development, with a guarantee that its 72 units **remain as low- and moderate-income housing through 2027**.



St. Stephen's parishioners and Urban Village residents planted trees in 2005 on Urban Village and St. Stephen's property.

WIDENING THE CIRCLE THE CAMPAIGN FOR ST. STEPHEN'S