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Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund Grant Program  
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To whom it may concern:

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I am pleased to submit this letter in support of Saint James Place receiving a grant to fund historic preservation work on the former St. James Episcopal Church. The Church and Parish Hall are contributing elements of the Taconic and West Avenue Historic District which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

St. James Church, dating from 1857, is a significant and early example of Gothic revival architecture in western Massachusetts. It is a major landmark in downtown Great Barrington and substantially contributes to the community's architectural and historic character. The preservation of St. James has broad based public support. When the building was threatened with abandonment and demolition, many residents of the area rallied to support its preservation. Many of these supporters had not previously been associated with the church.

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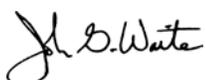
In our Preliminary Feasibility Study for the preservation of St. James Church, it was determined that "with the significant structural problems associated with the Church roof and stone masonry walls, the repair and restoration of this building will be challenging, but possible. The church complex is a significant component of downtown Great Barrington. Therefore, demolition of these buildings shouldn't be considered, and with a thoughtful and respectful approach to the repair and restoration, these buildings can continue as important elements in the Great Barrington community." After a substantial amount of probing and preliminary construction work, it has been amply demonstrated that it is not only feasible, but also practical to stabilize and restore the exterior masonry of the church. Innovative, cost effective techniques have been developed to accomplish this work. These techniques will be of benefit to others responsible for the preservation of similar masonry buildings.

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Not only are the proposed repair and restoration techniques innovative, but the whole approach to funding the renewal of the complex as a badly needed community cultural facility is very imaginative. We believe the reuse approach and funding program will have an impact on historic preservation on a national level and will serve as a model for the preservation of other redundant religious facilities. The project has already attracted interest from regional and national historic preservation groups and agencies for providing a new tool for reusing old religious buildings. The project has also received support within the southern Berkshire community because of the new cultural programs that will be housed in the complex.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage your support for this important project.

Sincerely,



John G. Waite, FAIA