LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING REPORT

March 18, 2024

Agenda Item #:	7
Project Title:	2450 Atwood Ave - Exterior Alterations to a Designated Madison Landmark - St. Bernard's Catholic Church (District 15)
Legistar File ID #:	82374
Prepared By:	Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner
Members:	Present: Richard Arnesen, Edna Ely-Ledesma, Molly Harris, Jacob Morrison, and Maurice Taylor Excused: Katie Kaliszewski and Ald. Amani Latimer Burris

Summary

Bradley Servin, registering neither in support nor in opposition and available to answer questions

Bailey provided background information on the project.

Morrison said that he had several issues with the proposal. He noted there were no dimensions on any of the submittal materials, so when evaluating size, scale, and form, he was unable to tell. He said that he didn't have issues with the mechanical louvers or any modernization elements, which seemed appropriate and necessary. The overall location of the porte cochere seemed fine, but there are issues with the scale, size, and form. The materials are not well-defined, and it is hard to tell if it is different from the existing building in the rendering. The buttresses on the porte cochere are not at all like the buttresses called out in the submittal, which are typical side buttresses that are the same width from top to bottom and diminish in depth as you go up. These are more like the front buttresses around the doors on Atwood Avenue, but they are of different proportion and the front ones have trefoil elements on the top and are much taller buttresses. This is not at all sympathetic to the church. It is a very tall structure with a flat roof, which seems blocky and out of keeping; it somehow simultaneously seems too big and yet not expressive enough. It either needs to have a peaked roof or a flat roof that is simpler. There is a lot of structure here. Even the bridge portion that connects back to the church is very tall, and I'm not sure why it needs to be that tall. The connection of the porte cochere to the church looks like it butts up against it and stops. Lastly, the roof is drained through scuppers just on the side wall, so there are no downspouts or internal gutters as far as he could tell; he requested that the applicant explain whether there is internal drainage. For these reasons, Morrison concluded that the porte cochere did not meet the criteria of scale, size, and form from SOI standard 9.

Bradley Servin, applicant, said the exterior materials are limestone block similar to the existing structure, and they picked a natural stone veneer as close as possible to match the existing structure. They clarified that the structure does extend to the existing building, connecting the roofline to the exterior wall at what is an existing door with an arched top to it. On the north elevation, one can see the existing height is regulated by the arched top of the existing door that goes into the church vestibule. The roof is approximately two feet higher than the top of that arch. The inside of the roof structure will be a soffit panel, and the roof structure itself is flat, constructed of bar joists and concrete beams. The roofline does drain through scuppers to the outside. They chose not to provide downspouts to those because they would come directly into where the arched openings are for the visual connection to the existing church. The door one can see on the back is a seven-foot door with a 42" round top over it.

Morrison said the ceiling may be two feet above that, but the roof is shown five to six feet above. On the plans, the connection seems to butt up against the building and not quite connect. Staff's comments that the proposed materials were differentiated from the existing church are contradicted by the applicant's comments that they are trying to match it.

Servin said that the existing stone was quarried over 100 years ago, so it is not available. They tried to find a similar stone. Morrison said that they don't have to match it, they could differentiate and use relatively similar materials knowing it is impossible to match 100-year-old, weathered stone.

Morrison said that the form of the buttresses is not what a buttress typically looks like. Arched openings typically happen in a wall and not going from buttress to buttress face to face. He found issues with the form that don't look differentiated enough to be modern and don't look accurate enough to be historic, so they don't work either way.

Bailey asked if they would envision pilasters rather than buttresses. Morrison said these are columns, not buttresses. Looking at the photo provided in the submittal of a buttress on the side of the building, it is not a series of stacked squares. If you look at the church and see the arched windows, they happen inside of fields of wall with buttresses between them, and they don't touch the buttress. The buttress is also the same width from top to bottom. If you look at the front of the church, the buttresses are closer to what is proposed in the porte cochere, but they are used in a much different way. He didn't see the use on the porte cochere as being an appropriate or needed use in the way they are used on the front of the church.

Arnesen asked why the pedestrian walkway was so tall and massive; it looks like it has a six-foot parapet. Servin said that he didn't know that it was six feet. The springline of the arch is a 13-foot fixed elevation to allow for fire trucks to go underneath. Arnesen asked why the pedestrian walkway was so much taller than the actual entrance to the church. Servin said that they kept the elevation of that height similar to the drive canopy of the porte cochere, and proportionally it tied to it more significantly to the porte cochere than to the elevator addition that has no language that ties to the existing church.

A motion was made by Taylor to approve the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness. There was no second.

Morrision said that the project was salvageable, but the structure will need to be a lot different. He was happy to refer the project to give the applicant a chance to make a more suitable addition that will follow the criteria regarding form, size, and scale in SOI standard #9. The location of the porte cochere is fine, but he would like to see more information on the materials. He would also like to see a different design that utilizes the language of the landmark building more appropriately and acknowledges the existing architectural character of the building. He said the applicant needed to address the scale not only of the area where a firetruck would have to drive through, but the pedestrian connection and how it connects to the building. There needs to be a much deeper examination of this structure and how it relates to and influences the porte cochere.

Ely-Ledesma added that there should be dimensions on the revised drawings.

Action

A motion was made by Morrison, seconded by Ely-Ledesma, to Refer the item to a future meeting. The motion passed by the following vote:
Ayes: 3 - Jacob Morrison; Molly Harris and Edna Ely-Ledesma
Noes: 1 - Maurice Taylor
Excused: 2 - Amani Latimer Burris and Katie Kaliszewski
Non Voting: 1 - Richard Arnesen