

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

March 18, 2024

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION



Project Name & Address: 2450 Atwood Avenue

Application Type(s): Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations

Legistar File ID # [82374](#)

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Date Prepared: March 14, 2024

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Father Michael Radowicz, St. Bernard Parish

Requested Action: The Applicant is requesting that the Landmarks Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness to make alterations to a designated landmark

Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The subject property is a designated landmark, St. Bernard's Catholic Church

Relevant Ordinance Sections:

41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

A certificate of appropriateness shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.

- (1) New Construction or Exterior Alteration. The Landmarks Commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for exterior alteration or construction only if:
 - (a) In the case of exterior alteration to a designated landmark, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 - (b) In the case of exterior alteration or construction of a structure on a landmark site, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 - (c) In the case of exterior alteration or construction on any property located in a historic district, the proposed exterior alteration or construction meets the adopted standards and guidelines for that district.
 - (d) In the case of any exterior alteration or construction for which a certificate of appropriateness is required, the proposed work will not frustrate the public interest expressed in this ordinance for protecting, promoting, conserving, and using the City's historic resources.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Analysis and Conclusion

The proposed project is to construct a porte cochere and mechanicals for HVAC on the back of the church structure, and reconfigure the parking lot to comply with current code requirements. The church was constructed in 1926 and designed by JJ Flad in the Late Gothic Revival style and designated a landmark in 1981. The church is undergoing remodeling as part of its transition to serving as the cathedral for Madison. Staff has administratively approved work on the roof and gutters for the church building, and alterations to the rectory. The larger reconfiguration of the parking lot and the construction of a porte cochere are of a level of alteration to the landmark site that requires the review and approval of the Landmarks Commission.

For the parking lot, it is currently a largely interrupted asphalt surface parking lot. The reconfigured site will include a bioretention pond and landscaping islands, with additional parking in the area where the rear wing of the education building was once located. The reworked site includes a drive aisle that will be serviced by a porte cochere to provide covered loading and receiving to the accessible entrance on the rear of the structure. The porte cochere is a large structure, but is in keeping with the scale of the church structure. It is a simple design that utilizes the architectural vocabulary of the Gothic Revival building, but the type of stone and design will allow it to read as a product of its time.

The new louvers and exhaust pipes for the HVAC system are proposed to be introduced onto the rear of the historic structure. It will not destroy significant architectural features on the building and they will be located on the side of the building where other mechanical equipment is already installed.

A discussion of the relevant ordinance sections follows:

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. The property is being adaptively reused to increase its capacity to serve as the cathedral for Madison. The work will make minimal changes to the distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships of the historic property.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The only historic materials proposed to be removed are areas of stone wall cladding on the rear of the structure in order to accommodate additional HVAC ventilation.

3. While the porte cochere is a substantial structure, it is still a simple design that utilizes the architectural vocabulary of the historic resource, but will be separated from the historic structure so as not to create a false sense of history. It is also proposed for the rear of the site.
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. The new addition of the porte cochere is separate from the historic structure and will not destroy historic materials or features. It is proposed as differentiated from the old but compatible with the character of the property. The increased landscaping in the parking lot will return the appearance of the site to a better approximation of what it was before the surface parking lot was installed and the site was more vegetated.
10. The porte cochere and the reconfigured parking lot could be removed in the future without adversely impacting the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment.

Recommendation

Staff believes that the standards for granting a Certificate of Appropriateness are met and recommends the Landmarks Commission approve the project as proposed.