CITY OF SAINT PAUL
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FILE NAME: 548 Lafond Avenue
DATE OF APPLICATION: May 1, 2014
APPLICANT: Rita Goodrich, MacDonald and Mack Architects
OWNER: The Church of Saint Agnes
DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING: May 22, 2014
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Site-Church of St. Agnes
CATEGORY: Pivotal
CLASSIFICATION: Building Permit
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: John Beaty, Christine Boulware
DATE: May 14, 2014

A. SITE DESCRIPTION: The Church of Saint Agnes is significant as one of the truly outstanding examples of Baroque Revival, ecclesiastical architecture in Minnesota. It was designed by George Ries and built in two phases between 1901 and 1912. The builders were John Fischer, Lauer Brothers, and John R. Schmitt. The footprint is primarily rectangular with the north-facing narthex and semitransepts projecting from each side to make the Latin cross form. The two-story building has a four-story, square tower at the right-rear (southwest) corner topped with a copper onion dome, an octagonal, arcaded copper belvedere, a narrow copper spire, and a gilded cross finial.

Red clay tiles cover the longitudinal mansard roof. The semitransepts and narthex have parapet gables, and gambrel roofs connect them to the lower pitch of the main roof. The apse is semi-circular and has a round mansard roof projecting from the lower pitch of the main roof. There is an octagonal baptistery behind the facade at the left side, and an octagonal bay behind the facade on the right side; both one-story with mansard roofs.

The walls of the building are smooth-faced ashlar limestone with regular courses at the basement and alternating narrow and wide courses above. The square pilasters on all elevations terminate with Ionic capitals supporting reeded and fluted friezes at the cornice. The architraves at the front entrances project with multi-piece broken pediments. The three niches on the facade contain alabaster statues.

The front doors lead out onto terrace which is, in plan, roughly rectangular with corners that have quirks and a bead. A low parapet wall with Indiana limestone trim and veneer surrounds the terrace. Parishioners enter the terrace by a set of stone steps flanked by walls that match the details of the terrace walls.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES: The applicant is proposing to repair the stairs, terraces, and handrails at the front of the church and install new concrete footings, substructure, and parapet walls re-using as much stone veneer and trim as possible. The applicant has indicated two potential design alternatives. The first is to replace the historic cast and wrought iron handrails, replicating the design of the existing elements but modified to meet ADA requirements. The second is to install replica historic lighting based upon historic photographs.

C. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

Preservation Program for Saint Agnes Church (Ordinance No. 17276, *§ 2)*

The exterior appearance of the building should be preserved in a manner consistent with the original design intent. Any additions or alterations that would obscure or detract from the architectural integrity or historic character of the building or its site should be avoided.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, 1992

Standards for Rehabilitation

1. *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
3. *Each property shall 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 architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*
4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*
5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
7. *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*
8. *Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*
9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall 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*

The Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Masonry

U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, 1995

1. Identify, Retain and Preserve

a. *Identifying, retaining, and preserving masonry features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as walls, brackets, railings, cornices, window architraves, door pediments, steps, and columns; and details such as tooling and bonding patterns, coatings, and color.*

2. Protect and Maintain

a. *Protecting and maintaining masonry by providing proper drainage so that water does not stand on flat, horizontal surfaces or accumulate in curved decorative features.*

b. *Cleaning masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration or remove heavy soiling.*

c. *Carrying out masonry surface cleaning tests after it has been determined that such cleaning is appropriate. Tests should be observed over a sufficient period of time so that both the immediate and the long range effects are known to enable selection of the gentlest method possible.*

d. *Cleaning masonry surfaces with the gentlest method possible, such as low pressure water and detergents, using natural bristle brushes.*

e. *Inspecting painted masonry surfaces to determine whether repainting is necessary.*

f. Removing damaged or deteriorated paint only to the next sound layer using the gentlest method possible (e.g., handscraping) prior to repainting.

g. Applying compatible paint coating systems following proper surface preparation.

h. Repainting with colors that are historically appropriate to the building and district.

i. Evaluating the overall condition of the masonry to determine whether more than protection and maintenance are required, that is, if repairs to the masonry features will be necessary.

3. Repair

a. Repairing masonry walls and other masonry features by repointing the mortar joints where there is evidence of deterioration such as disintegrating mortar, cracks in mortar joints, loose bricks, damp walls, or damaged plasterwork.

b. Removing deteriorated mortar by carefully hand-raking the joints to avoid damaging the masonry.

c. Duplicating old mortar in strength, composition, color, and texture.

d. Duplicating old mortar joints in width and in joint profile.

e. Repairing stucco by removing the damaged material and patching with new stucco that duplicates the old in strength, composition, color, and texture.

f. Using mud plaster as a surface coating over unfired, unstabilized adobe because the mud plaster will bond to the adobe.

g. Cutting damaged concrete back to remove the source of deterioration (often corrosion on metal reinforcement bars). The new patch must be applied carefully so it will bond satisfactorily with, and match, the historic concrete. Replacement stones tooled to match original.

h. Repairing masonry features by patching, piecing-in, or consolidating the masonry using recognized preservation methods. Repair may also include the limited replacement in kind--or with compatible substitute material--of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of masonry features when there are surviving prototypes such as terra-cotta brackets or stone balusters.

i. Applying new or non-historic surface treatments such as water-repellent coatings to masonry only after repointing and only if masonry repairs have failed to arrest water penetration problems.

4. Replace

a. Replacing in kind an entire masonry feature that is too deteriorated to repair--if the overall form and detailing are still evident--using the physical evidence as a model to reproduce the feature. Examples can include large sections of a wall, a cornice, balustrade, column, or stairway. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.

b. Designing and installing a new masonry feature such as steps or a door pediment when the historic feature is completely missing. It may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material, and color of the historic building.

D. FINDINGS:

1. On August 29, 1985, The Church of Saint Agnes was designated a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site established under Ordinance No. 17276. The Heritage Preservation Commission shall protect the architectural character of heritage preservation sites through review and approval or denial of applications for city permits for exterior work within designated heritage preservation sites §73.04.(4).
2. The reconstruction of the stone steps matching in-kind conforms to Standards 5 and 6 and Guideline 4(a).
3. The inspection and re-use of as much existing stone as possible conforms to Standard 2 and Guideline 1(a).
4. The replacement of unsalvageable stone with matching pieces of stone of similar origin, color, and dressed to match existing and historic stone is an in-kind replacement and generally conforms to Standards 5 and 6 and Guideline 4(a).
5. The repair of the existing metal handrails complies with Standard 6. If the applicant decided to pursue alternate #2 to furnish, finish, and install new railings replicating the existing design and modifying to meet current ADA requirements, review by HPC staff will be necessary to determine compliance with the Guidelines.
6. The replication and installation of light fixtures based upon historic photographic evidence conforms to Standard 6.
7. The proposal, as submitted, will not adversely affect the Program for the Preservation or architectural control of the Church of St. Agnes (Leg. Code §73.06 (e)) provided the following conditions are met.

E. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the findings staff recommends approval of the building permit application provided the following condition(s) are met:

1. Reglets for the terrace flashing shall be placed into existing joints on the facade of the church.
2. A mortar analysis shall be provided to staff and a specification provided that details an appropriate mortar mix, color, and joint profile.
3. While the proposal is to reuse the metal handrails, if replacement is necessary, drawings for the new handrails shall be submitted to HPC staff for final review and approval.
4. The applicant shall contact HPC staff to conduct a site visit to review new stone samples at the site for consistency in color and finish with the historic limestone.
5. Any revisions to the approved plans shall be submitted to HPC staff for review.
6. A copy of the stamped HPC approved plans shall be on site for the duration of the construction project.