



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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DATE: December 12, 2018
TO: Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee
FROM: Josh Williams, Senior City Planner
SUBJECT: Proposed designation of St. Andrew's Church as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site

BACKGROUND

St. Andrew's Church, located in the Como Park neighborhood, has been nominated for local designation as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site. When a nomination for local designation is made, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) is responsible for evaluating whether or not the property meets criteria for local designation, and for consulting with the Saint Paul Planning Commission and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding the proposed designation. The nomination is then forwarded to the Saint Paul City Council for consideration.

PROCESS and PLANNING COMMISSION ROLE

On October 1, 2018, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) received a nomination requesting review and consideration of St Andrew's Church for local designation as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site. The HPC, having provided notice to affected property owners within 100 feet of the subject address and posted the agenda to the city website and the City's Early Notification System, duly conducted a public hearing on November 5, 2018 to review said request to designate the property as a Heritage Preservation Site where all interested parties, including the applicant and owner, were given an opportunity to be heard.

The HPC agreed that the property meets four criteria (1,4,5 & 7) for local designation and voted 8-1 to continue the designation process and forward the nomination to the Saint Paul Planning Commission and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office for review and recommendations. A *Designation Activities Checklist* and timeline is attached indicating the steps for pursuing local designation.

Per Saint Paul Legislative Code 73.05 (b), the Planning Commission shall make recommendations regarding proposed Heritage Preservation Site designations (emphasis added):

The heritage preservation commission shall advise the city planning commission of the proposed designation of a heritage preservation site, including boundaries, and a program for the preservation of a heritage preservation site, and secure from the city planning commission its recommendation with respect to the relationship of the proposed heritage preservation designation to the comprehensive plan of the City of Saint Paul, its opinion as to the effect of the proposed designation upon the surrounding neighborhood, and its opinion and recommendation as to any other planning consideration which may be relevant to the proposed designation, together with its recommendation of approval, rejection or modification of the proposed

designation. Said recommendation shall become part of the official record concerning the proposed designation and shall be submitted by the heritage preservation commission along with its recommendation concerning the proposed designation to the city council. The heritage preservation commission may make such modifications, changes and alterations concerning the proposed designations as it deems necessary in consideration of the recommendations of the city planning commission.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Church of St. Andrew of St. Paul, commonly known as St. Andrew's Catholic Church or simply St. Andrew's, is in a residential neighborhood on Como Avenue, two blocks east of Lexington Avenue, and one block to the southwest of Lake Como. The property address is 1031-1051 Como Avenue West (lots 12-14, block 4 of the Warrendale Addition). The area is zoned single-family residential. Immediately to the north of and physically adjoining the church is a 3-story school building, constructed in 2014 on the former site of the church rectory. Adjoining the 2014 building to the north and east is a 1950s-era 3-story school building, which was originally the parish school for St. Andrew's. All buildings are currently owned and occupied by the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS), a charter school serving grades K-8. Single-family homes are located immediately to the east of the TCGIS campus, which also includes two small parking lots and outdoor play space, and to the west are several single-family homes and a 4-unit apartment building. A smaller church and associated surface parking lot are located to the south and east of the property. The remainder of the immediate neighborhood is single-family homes.

Designed by architect Charles A. Hausler, and constructed in 1927, the building represents an example of the Romanesque Revival style architecture. The church is a large, imposing building with overall dimensions of approximately 70 feet by 107 feet. The complex building features various bays, wings, towers, and roof forms. Resting on a raised basement, the building is clad in brown brick, in several dark tones, and trimmed with Bedford limestone. The elaborate brickwork features various patterns including Flemish, American, running, basket weave, and herringbone bonds, as well as extensive brick corbelling. A broad intersecting-gable roof, with multi-colored ceramic tiles, covers the main body of the church. The building achieves a highly-polychromatic effect using dark brick, light stone, and multi-colored tiles.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONFORMANCE AND EFFECT ON SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD

The Comprehensive Plan provides mixed guidance on the proposed nomination, with both policies supporting and policies not supporting local designation of the former St. Andrew's Church.

The Historic Preservation Chapter includes the following specific provisions regarding the nomination and protection of historic resources:

HP Strategy 3: Identify, Evaluate and Designate Historic Resources

3.11. Make the designation of significant historic resources as heritage preservation sites a priority for the City Council.

3.12. Designate historic resources, such as buildings, structures, objects, archaeological sites, historic districts, and landscapes as Saint Paul heritage preservation sites or historic districts.

HP Strategy 4: Preserve and Protect Historic Resources

4.3. Protect undesignated historic resources.

The HPC has found that St. Andrew's Church meet the legislative criteria (Sec. 73.05) for designation, indicating the value of St. Andrew's as an historic resource. As such, the Historic Preservation Chapter clearly supports the designation of St. Andrew's Church.

The proposed designation is also in conformance with similar policies in the District 10 Como Community Council Plan, which is an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the following policies apply to the nomination:

HLU 4: Enhance physical cohesiveness of the neighborhood by supporting initiatives that strengthen neighborhood identity.

HLU 4.1: Support programs, studies, and policies that serve to preserve its historical character.

HLU 4.1.8: Support the designation of historic resources such as buildings, structures, objects, archaeological sites, historic districts, and landscapes as Saint Paul heritage preservation sites or historic districts.

Policy HLU 4.1.8 supports the designation of historic resources, consistent with the nomination of St. Andrew's Church. Policies HLU 4 and 4.1 speak more generally to importance of historic resources to neighborhood fabric and identity.

However, a broader reading of the Comprehensive Plan finds additional policies applicable to the proposed nomination which do not support local designation. Specifically, the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan includes several policies addressing educational institutions and acknowledges the importance of these institutions in providing "opportunities for Saint Paul and its residents as well as for those who work in the city". It also acknowledges that "education facilities often provide an identity for specific areas of the city". The following policy speaks most directly to how the City should approach the issue of the nomination for local designation:

LU 1.55: Collaborate with public and private elementary and secondary schools in conjunction with construction or major remodeling.

This policy is best considered in the context of the practical impacts that local designation could have. While TCGIS owns the property, the school was not the nominating party, and strongly opposes local designation. Further, local designation of the property would complicate TCGIS investment as currently planned in new facilities at the present location of the school. If the former church is locally designated, any proposed alterations to the exterior of the building would need to be reviewed by the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC). In the event of proposed demolition, the HPC could approve, approve with conditions (such as, for example, saying only a portion of the building can be demolished), or deny the proposed demolition. Any such HPC decision would be subject to appeal to the City Council, with the City Council having the final authority over the decision. While local designation would not necessarily have the direct result of preventing the TCGIS's planned project, it is at the same time difficult to square the Comprehensive Plan's directive to "collaborate" with the local designation of their property against their will.

Historic properties can help define the character of their neighborhoods, create a strong sense of place, enhance the quality of life of residents, and serve as a catalyst for investment in surrounding properties. While some of the residential properties surrounding St. Andrew's Church predate the building, it has been a defining landmark of the neighborhood since 1927, and the scale of the church relative to surrounding properties has reinforced this role in defining neighborhood identity. Designation would help ensure that this neighborhood identity is maintained. It would also ensure that the historic integrity of the property is maintained, allowing their benefits to the surrounding neighborhoods to be sustained and enhanced. It can also pave the way for state or national designation as well as financial incentives such as historic rehabilitation tax credits and grants which could make reuse or adaptation of the building more financially feasible.

While the above is true, it is also possible that local designation of the property could complicate the expansion plans of TCGIS and ultimately lead to the property becoming vacant. It is difficult

to assess the likelihood of that outcome, as it depends not in small part on decisions that can only be made by TCGIS, and the actions of the owner may be constrained by financial or other practical considerations. Nonetheless, it remains a possible result of a decision to locally designate the property against the will of the owner.

The Comprehensive Plan does not speak directly to this issue, although policy LU 1.50 does call for the City to “facilitate the redevelopment of commercial areas where existing buildings are no longer considered functional to accommodate viable retail and businesses”, and in doing so suggests that vacant and underutilized buildings are generally not an asset to the community. And, notably, policy HP 4.5 states that the City should “acquire key threatened historic properties until a suitable owner can be found”, suggesting that the will of a property owner should receive some consideration.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the Comprehensive Plan provides conflicting guidance regarding the nomination of the former St. Andrew’s Church for local designation as a heritage preservation site. The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee has a sufficient basis in the Comprehensive Plan for a recommendation to the Planning Commission of either support for or opposition to the designation of St. Andrew’s Church at 1031-1051 Como Avenue West as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site.

Attachments:

1. St. Andrew’s Church nomination
2. HPC staff report
3. Map of Proposed Designation Boundary
4. Preservation Program for St. Andrew’s church
5. Designation Activities Checklist /Timeline