



## Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

### LIVING WITH HISTORY

**HPC meeting date: 2/5/2018**  
**Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4**  
**Staff reviewer: Tim Askin**  
**PTS #114425 CCF #171154**

<b>Property</b>	833 W. WISCONSIN AV.	ST JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
<b>Owner/Applicant</b>	Josh Jeffers J. Jeffers & Co. P.O. Box 305 Milwaukee, WI 53201-0305 Phone: (414) 807-4869	Josh Jeffers J. Jeffers & Co. P.O. Box 305 Milwaukee, WI 53201-0305 Phone: (414) 807-4869

### Proposal

Proposal for the St. James Episcopal Church consists of multiple parts, including:

- Demolition/removal of parish house
- New addition constructed in place of parish house
- Maintenance and repair of original church and apse

### Background

St. James Church dates to 1868. The interior was rebuilt to the original plans after a fire in 1872; the rear parish or guildhall addition to dates to 1899. The exteriors of both parts of the building are effectively untouched since 1899, apart from the installation of additional stained glass windows and glass entry doors at the front of the church. The church was designed by Detroit architect Gordon William Lloyd. Local architect John A. Moller designed the parish hall.

The church interior was altered in 1914; it has seen little change since that date. The interior of the parish house was substantially remodeled in 1962. Only one room, a large, heavy-timber vaulted chamber, retains integrity to the date of original construction. The interior spaces were remodeled in a style that has not aged well; it can be described as a typical 1960s protestant church interior. The plywood panel interior finishes are best described as jarring in comparison to the fine masonry exterior. A small chapel constructed during the 1962 renovation appears intact to its date of construction and is of some significance (and notably lacking in significant amounts of plywood). The chapel contains two war memorial stained glass windows.

St. James is one of the oldest parishes in the city and is believed to be the oldest stone church in the city. Its parishioners have included the Mitchell family amongst many other luminaries.

This is a very serious proposal to demolish an entire wing of a locally and nationally designated historic property. Such a level of partial demolition has not come before the Commission in the past.

### Staff Comments: Demolition

The property is surrounded on all sides by National Register-listed properties. St. James itself, the St James Court Apartments, Central Library, Wisconsin Club/Mitchell House, and Calvary Presbyterian Church are all individually listed on the National Register. All are part of the National Register-listed Near West Side Multiple Resource Area (a cover document that eases listing for properties in a defined geographic area, but still requires individual listing).

## Criteria for Demolition

*320-21-11-h. Criteria; Certificates to Allow Demolition. In determining whether to grant, grant with conditions, deny, or defer action on a certificate of appropriateness to allow partial or complete demolition, the commission shall consider any of the following:*

*h-1. Whether the structure is of such architectural or historic significance that its demolition would be detrimental to the public interest and contrary to the general welfare of the people of the city.*

This Episcopal parish hall at St. James is a rare example of a nineteenth century attached protestant parish hall in the city. It reflects a movement toward attached church halls in this historical era. There is at least one other example of an attached, structurally integrated, Episcopal parish hall in the city. It was also a later addition to this other church, St. Marks' Episcopal on N. Hackett. St. Mark's is substantially newer in both itself (1911) and its attached parish hall (1949) and therefore does not represent the same historical era as St. James. All Saints Episcopal Cathedral (1868) also has an attached parish hall (1891), but it is attached at a corner, not structurally integrated, and substantially different in architectural character.

However, its heavy use of masonry and direct attachment to the church is unusual for its period of construction. The historical significance of this parish to the city's history is greater than most others due to its parishioners (including the Mitchell family) and its effect on public education in the city. A home economics curriculum that its school created was adopted by Milwaukee Public Schools.

*h-2. Whether the structure, although not itself an individually designated historic structure, contributes to the distinctive architectural or historic character of the district as a whole and should be preserved for the benefit of the people of the city.*

The parish hall contributes to the architectural character of the overall complex, to its National Register listing, and to the National Register Near West Side Multiple Resource Area.

*h-3. Whether demolition of the structure on a historic site or within a historic district would be contrary to the purpose and intent of this section and to the objectives of the historic preservation plan for the applicable district as duly adopted by the common council.*

The parish hall has become an integral part of the structure. It is well over 100 years old itself. It is impossible to judge the appropriateness of demolition in accordance with this guideline without a formal evaluation indicating that adaptive reuse is infeasible. The intent of the ordinance is to preserve historic structures within the city when feasible; therefore, this information should be provided. This information would be required if the applicant were to appeal a denial of the Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition.

*h-4. Whether the structure is of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture, or material that it could not be reproduced without great difficulty or expense.*

The design is old, unusual, and uncommon. Parish halls like this are no longer being built in the city. Few places anywhere in the country are building parish halls of such substantial masonry and elaborate heavy timber framing. There would be great difficulty and expense in reproducing anything similar due to limited availability of materials and a reduced number of skilled craftsmen capable of the work since 1899.

*h-5. Whether retention of the structure would promote the general welfare of the people of the city and state by encouraging the study of American history, architecture, and design, or by developing an understanding of American culture and heritage.*

St. James Church previously had a different, detached parish hall on its premises. A wood-framed Greek Revival former church was moved to the site to serve the parish hall function. The construction of the purpose-built attached parish hall with multiple functions indicates the increase in services provided by churches generally in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that required larger and custom-built accommodations.

*h-6. Whether the structure is in such a deteriorated condition that it is not structurally or economically feasible to preserve, restore, or use it, provided that any hardship or difficulty claimed by the owner which is self-created or a result of demolition by neglect cannot qualify as a basis for the issuance of a certificate of appropriateness.*

No consequential deterioration is evident. It is notable that interior integrity is negligible except for one room that is a large, heavy-timber framed chamber. The applicant's proposal includes deconstructing this chamber and rebuilding it within the replacement structure.

Applicant states that for his proposed use of the main church building, preservation and restoration of the church hall, are infeasible. The cost of asbestos abatement at this property would be excessive; it is moderated slightly by a lesser requirement for containment in a demolition rather than rehabilitation. Change of use dictates multiple accessible entries, although ramps or wheelchair lifts could be accommodated.

h-7. If the structure is located on a historic site or within a historic district, whether, and with consideration of design review recommendations issued by the department of city development ...

N/A

*Replacement.* Demolition criteria for districts typically include consideration of the replacement structure. "Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is to be replaced by a compatible building of similar age, architectural style, and scale or by a new building that would fulfill the same aesthetic function in the area as did the old structure." (Brady Street Commercial Historic District Guideline [D].6.) Although this criterion is not binding, it is worthy of mention and the Commission's consideration.

The proposed replacement is new construction therefore not of similar age. The new proposal is contemporary, with exception of the north façade of the parish house that will be retained.

#### **Staff Comments: Replacement Addition**

The new addition has a synthetic masonry base along the majority of the Wisconsin Avenue elevation and the ground level of other elevations. The west end of the north elevation behind the St. James Courts will feature metal trellises to create a green screen feature. Upper levels use a cementitious panel system with a highly seamed appearance. This is set behind a retained parish hall façade with staircases removed to allow at-grade access to the new building.

Lower levels will include catering kitchen, event space, mechanicals, and storage. Upper levels are designed as student rental apartments.

The remaining portion of the addition will be programmed as student housing and applicant states that it will provide a backdrop to the church as to not detract from its historic character. Applicant has indicated an intention to re-use masonry from the demolition on the interior of the public portions of the new building and to relocate the timber-framed chamber from the parish hall into the new building.

A courtyard will be developed at the Wisconsin Avenue frontage as an extension of the event venues (in the new addition) and function as an additional outdoor gathering space. Extensive landscaping is expected if the new tower proposal is approved, but this has not been submitted as part of this project. Any elements other than fencing should return to the Commission for further approvals.

### **Addition Guidelines**

The north, east and west elevations and roofline are integral to the church's architectural significance. Additions require the approval of the Commission. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of height, roof configuration, fenestration, scale, design, color and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevations.

- Height
  - The height is out proportion to the existing building, but is compatible with other, later buildings in the immediate vicinity. Lowering by one floor should be considered.
- Roof Configuration
  - The flat roof could be compatible if some sort of cornice detail were added to tie in to the St. James Court Apartments and the buttress details of the church.
- Fenestration
  - Fenestration consists of contemporary metal windows in a historically inspired configuration, showing clear influence from the neighboring St. James Court Apartments. In contrast, nearly all windows in the church and parish house have a pointed, gothic arch and are of historic, non-aluminum materials. An echo of these shapes would add character and compatibility.
  - Proposed aluminum storefront doors for the Wisconsin Avenue façade are acceptable as proposed; however, service doors on other elevations, particularly the east elevation, should have more design character than the proposed flush panel doors.
- Scale
  - Scale could be improved with multiple setbacks; however, it is acknowledged that this is a tight, landlocked site. The revised project with retention of the north façade adds one setback that helps the new building seem less out of proportion to the church.
- Design
  - The design is rectilinear. There is no influence of the angles, curves, and arches, of the church's gothic revival, ecclesiastical architecture. An echo of these shapes would add character and improve compatibility.
  - A cornice as simple as a stone ledge would add definition to the building's lines and increase compatibility with surrounding historic architecture.
- Color
  - The proposed addition is compatible in color. Cordova Stone is in a "limestone" shade. Storefront system will be a bronze paint finish. The cementitious panels and aluminum trim are specified as "khaki brown" which will loosely resemble cream brick.
- Materials
  - Materials are modern synthetic limestone (Cordova Stone), cementitious panels (unspecified), double-hung aluminum windows, and aluminum storefront systems (Kawneer, Tubelite, or similar) for entry areas.
  - The specifically proposed synthetic limestone product could meet the guidelines if the chiselface or rockface finishes are used. Staff does not recommend the proposed groundface finish or the fourth available finish of textureface that has a stucco-like appearance.
  - Cementitious panels give an EIFS-like appearance that the Commission has tended not to approve.

### **Staff Comments: Maintenance and Repair of the Main Church Structure**

The application provides insufficient information to rule on this issue. Repairs are welcomed, but only general information was provided and specific methods, materials, or locations are not mentioned. It is acknowledged that much of the work may require exploratory demolition and further analysis of the building that has only recently changed ownership. No new doors appear to be proposed for the main church. Refer to staff for approval of repairs upon provision of further details or return to Commission depending on scope of work.

## Recommendations

### Demolition

Staff is neutral on the demolition. As this parish hall constitutes a substantial portion of a National Register-listed property, any approval of demolition should include a requirement that Historic American Building Survey documentation at level I or II (68 FR 43159) should be prepared for the demolished section, and filed with Historic Preservation staff and donated to the Library of Congress through the National Park Service. Coordination will be required with the State Historic Preservation Office for this demolition of a National Register resource.

See Appendix for the relevant sections of the Federal Register and links to guidance documents.

Archaeological monitoring during ground disturbance activities is recommended because of the former cemetery on site. Multiple efforts have been undertaken to relocate all graves, but is extraordinarily rare that any cemetery relocation is 100% successful.

### New Construction

If the Commission approves the demolition, staff believes the new addition can meet the new construction guidelines with some modest modifications.

#### *Conditions on new construction*

1. No HVAC equipment shall be installed on the Wisconsin Avenue elevation (as depicted in current renderings) and no more vents and equipment than shown in the current drawings shall be permitted on the other elevations. Rooftop mechanicals shall be screened, painted out, or placed such that they are not visible from the sidewalk on the north side of Wisconsin Avenue.
2. Cordova Stone should be in chiselface or rockface only and should cover the entire addition through the height of the second floor (level three line in drawings).
3. Clarify disposition of war memorial stained glass windows in the chapel and any other stained glass windows in the parish hall.

The Commission may consider adding conditions about lowering height, adding a cornice, or reducing the rectilinear character of the new tower, and changing shapes of windows.

### Repair of the Main Church Structure

Hold and refer to staff for approval of repairs upon provision of further details or return to Commission depending on scope of work.

### Previous HPC Action

Held over from the December 2017 meeting.

## Appendix

*Federal Register 68 FR 43159  
Guidelines for Architectural and Engineering Documentation  
A Notice by the National Park Service on 07/21/2003*

**Goal of Documentation.** The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), and the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) are the national historical architectural, engineering and landscape documentation programs of the National Park Service. The goal of HABS/HAER/HALS documentation is to provide architects, engineers, scholars, preservationists, and interested members of the public with comprehensive information on the historical, architectural, technological, or cultural significance of a building, site, structure, object or landscape. Placed on permanent deposit at the Library of Congress, HABS/HAER/HALS documentation serves as a permanent record of the growth and development of the nation's built environment....

HABS/HAER/HALS documentation usually consists of measured drawings, large-format photographs, and written data that highlight the significance of a building, site, structure, object, or landscape. This documentation acts as a form of insurance against fires and natural disasters by permitting the repair and, if necessary, reconstruction of historic resources damaged by such disasters. It is also used for scholarly research, interpretation, and education, and it often provides the basis for enforcing preservation easement. HABS/HAER/HALS documentation is often the last means of preservation of a property: when a property is to be demolished, documentation provides future researchers access to valuable information that otherwise would be lost....

### Content

Standard: Documentation shall adequately explicate and illustrate what is significant or valuable about the historic building, site, structure, object, or landscape being documented.

Guideline: Documentation shall meet one of the following requirements for content:

#### A. Level I

1. Drawings: a full set of measured drawings depicting existing or historic conditions
2. Photographs: photographs with large-format negatives of exterior and interior views; photocopies with large-format negatives of select, existing drawings or historic views that are produced in accordance with the U.S. Copyright Act (as amended)
3. Written data: history and description

#### B. Level II

1. Drawings: select existing drawings, where available, may be photographed with large-format negatives or photographically reproduced on Mylar in accordance with the U.S. Copyright Act, as amended
2. Photographs: photographs with large-format negatives of exterior and interior views, or historic views where available and produced in accordance with the U.S. Copyright Act, as amended
3. Written data: history and description

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2003/07/21/03-18197/guidlines-for-architectural-and-engineering-documentation>

See also <https://www.nps.gov/hdp/standards/habsguidelines.htm>