



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 6/12/2017

Ald. Jose Perez District: 12

Staff reviewer: Tim Askin

PTS #114273

CCF #170181

Property

524 W. HISTORIC MITCHELL ST.

St. Stanislaus Church, Mitchell Street Historic District

Owner/Applicant

ST STANISLAUS CONG

George Baird

C/O FR LUIS PACHECO-SANCHEZ

524 W Historic Mitchell

524 W HISTORIC MITCHELL ST

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Proposal

The church seeks to replace its 1966 abstract art glass windows throughout the sanctuary and chancel with historically sensitive, liturgically significant designs within the existing openings. Windows of the 1960s era will remain in the steeples. This is part of ongoing rehabilitation program.

Staff comments

St. Stanislaus is a revered historic church and an anchor of the Mitchell Street district. The cornerstone for the present building was laid in 1872 and it was completed prior to 1875. The church has changed substantially from its original design, in two major eras: c. 1900 and in the 1960s in response to Vatican II.

If the original design sketch is to be taken at face value, the present stained glass windows may already be a third generation in their respective openings. The first are unknown, the second are partially historically documented ones, which they are attempting to reproduce, and the third are the present abstract glass. Furthermore, the rose window is not part of the original design and dates between 1893 and 1915.

The present windows were installed in 1966 in a response to the Second Vatican Council. The old figural windows were deemed distracting from the modern, more participatory English language mass. So they were replaced with abstract glass with no particular religious significance. Now, as the church has returned to offering the Latin mass, they would like to return to having figural, liturgically significant windows with a 19th century character.

The preservation guidelines for windows in the Mitchell Street district are unusual. They appear to have been written with a project like this in mind. "Retain the present configuration of panes...except for restoration to original condition."

The church is making its best effort to replicate and honor the windows that were destroyed in the 1962 renovations, even to the level of working with the original glass manufacturer to obtain a specialized opalescent glass. The designs presented appear to meet the preservation guidelines as much as feasible. The windows destroyed in the 1960s were not documented before their removal and nearly all photos were taken of the sanctuary as a whole, leaving only some windows visible at oblique angles. Small portions of original glass have survived. They have served as a model for trim pieces and color tones. Some small, figurally intact portions of original glass are being incorporated into the new windows. Staff believes these salvage pieces should be called out in some subtle way.

Recommendation

Recommend HPC Approval with conditions

Conditions

1. Applicant must return to the Commission for approval of the final four window designs that are not yet complete.
2. Salvage pieces from previous windows need to be highlighted in some subtle way for differentiation. A different color of coming would suffice.
3. Provide photo documentation of existing windows if existing or arrange for staff to do so.
4. Strongly consider incorporating a date into the window designs.

Previous HPC action**Previous Council action**